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THE DARK AGES

CULTURE AND THE ORATORIO[1]

WE have seen that the end of the seventeenth century was the critical period for English music: and yet, judging purely on the evidence of the music itself, one could hardly have anticipated a breakdown so complete and apparently final. Purcell is possibly a composer of greater genius than Lully (I do not say dogmatically that he is so, since we know so little of Lully's music at first hand), yet it was the Frenchman who stabilized the essential theatrical convention. Matthew Locke is only a minor composer but one can see that he is part of the same phase in European culture that produced Lully; if one compares him with a composer of the next generation, Thomas Arne, one becomes aware of the full significance of the collapse. For while one can relate Locke, for all his inadequate realization of his gifts, to Lully one cannot possibly in any serious sense relate Arne—whose natural talents were certainly not inferior to Locke's—to Couperin and Bach. The 'rhetorical' period which, on the continent merged into the great classic 'shape' structures of autocracy in England petered out in prettiness and insipidity. Arne is a maker of charming music in an accepted European 'shape' stylization; but he is hardly a musical personality of any kind, local or European. His work lacks 'character'; contrast his string music with that of Byrd or Gibbons, or William Lawes or Jenkins, and one sees the difference between tradition and cliché.

The fact that we so completely missed out both the period of classic autocracy and the period of dramatic-social sonata technique means that we inevitably tend to compare our music's position in the eighteenth century with what it had been in the great days of the sixteenth; whereas the more pertinent question to ask is, as we have observed, why did our music not evolve in the same way as that of continental countries? But such an over-simplification has its advantages because although composers such as the two Scarlattis, Couperin and Rameau, Haydn and Mozart—the two latter especially in their 'inveterately dramatic' later sonatas—were to achieve the perfect balance between the personal and the communal life nonetheless the attitudes implicit in eighteenth century English musical culture were eventually to have a much more than local application. They expressed, merely prematurely, the direction in which European civilization as a whole was to tend; it is the dichotomy between them and the sixteenth century attitudes on which not only English, but European culture eventually splits.

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[1]Chapter from a book on Music and Society in England.

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We have seen that both polyphony and dance music are in essence communal activities; and that virtually up to the seventeenth century all music was communal and contemporary, and either religious or domestic. It depended on active participation between composers, performers and audience; even if the audience in church didn't actually take part in the singing at least it effected, or was supposed to effect, a spiritual participation. Byrd called one of his works 'Songes of sundrie natures, some of gravitie and others of myrth, fit for all companyes and voyces . . . for the delight of all such as take pleasure in the Exercise of that Art'; and the emphasis is upon the exercise. Music for him was an *activity*; he did not think of it primarily as a means of expressing the state of his soul (though it was such unavoidably). This is a fact which is not without bearing on the integrity of sixteenth century technique; the music was solidly written 'through' because, as a social activity, it had to be consistently interesting for all the performers.

Now no one would deny that eighteenth century Augustan civilization developed its own values (Reason, Truth and Nature) and its own conventions which, in Pope's case at least, preserved contact with the vital things in the seventeenth century; and no one, reading the fourth book of the *Dunciad* or Dr. Johnson's two great poems or looking at the most representative examples of Augustan architecture, would doubt that this was a great civilization. But at the same time one cannot but be aware of something odd about it—an oddity which is summed up in the complete disappearance of a dramatic tradition, the most direct and immediate relation of literature to life. The development of a balanced, critical prose style is of course a compensating (and evolutionarily necessary) virtue, but one that itself is perhaps evidence of a failing creativity. At any rate one might fairly say that no great poetry is more inherently undramatic than Johnson's[2] and it is significant that his dismally unsuccessful attempt at a play (*Irene*) is, anomalously, a play intended for *reading*. British drama has never really recovered since the Augustan age; and the disappearance of the musical tradition is inseparable from the dramatic decline—both in general terms because music is by nature a relatively 'immediate' form of creativity (and not naturally analytical and critical) and also specifically because (for reasons we have discussed in the last chapter) it was essential to the continuance of our musical tradition that music should link up with the stage. The old, direct creativity is not recovered; neither does a small, aristocratic, sophisticated social milieu emerge to take the place of the old.

One of the most important consequences of this is that the split, just beginning in Purcell's day, between the composer and the people drastically widens during the first half of the eighteenth century. The contemporary writer Roger North, commenting on

[2]See F. R. Leavis's article, *Johnson as Critic*, in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XII, No. 3, p. 191.

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the implications of the growth of the 'professional' virtuoso tradition, acutely remarks: 'The flourishing of an art or science is the number and value of the professors and those obtaining their end, which in musick is pleasure, and an innocuous Imploy of spare time, with a recreation. In the intervalls of business, the gain and credit is egregious; al which fell out when the Art was plaine and practicable and most sober families in England affected it. Now it is come to pass that few but Professors can handle it, and the value is derived upon high Flights and numbers of capitall performers, which may have brought an audience but the promiscuous and diffused practice of musick in remote parts about England is utterly confounded. And an ostentatious Pride hath taken Apollo's chair and almost subverted his monarchy'. It is certainly interesting that it is during the eighteenth century that the quality of English folk-songs themselves begins to deteriorate; the representative songs of the period—those of the *Vicar of Bray* type—tend to be less interesting, less rhythmically flexible and sensitive to the spoken language, more influenced by the squarely diatonic instrumental music of the town than earlier ones. By the time we reach such a phenomenon as *The Beggar's Opera* we can see the beginning of that patronizing attitude to the 'folk' which would have been as inconceivable to Byrd as to the mediæval composer who used the tunes of the folk along with the plainsong melodies as the thread round which to crystallize the lines of his polyphony, so that art music and folk music, and monody and polyphony, are both technically and sociologically complementary. Dr. Pepusch (a man of considerable intelligence, with a genuine respect for the English tradition so far as he understood it) dresses up the 'quaint old' tunes according to Gay's diatonic prescription; but in a great work such as Bull's Walsingham Variations for virginals it is impossible to say which is the more beautiful, the folk tune itself, or the art composer's realization of its polyphonic and figurative possibilities; because the folk tune is not a musical entity which the art composer takes over and 'treats', it is a part of his living experience which in a sense—in so far as there were then no artificial barriers between art composer and folk composer—he helped to create.[3] *The Beggar's Opera* is a typical manifestation of middle-class culture in its desire to 'get it both ways'; for if on the one hand it patronizes the folk, on the other it administers a 'realistic' rebuff to that aristocratic Italianate convention which the middle class public would have no truck with; it patronizes one and

[3]With reference to the kinship between the attitudes of sixteenth century art-composers and folk-composers see North: 'It is not to be wondred that musick did not proceed with more spirit and activity yet; for ye very faculty as wel as ye manner of ye musitians was so lately ecclesiastick, that ye solemne style would not wear off of a sudden, but as in former times be prevalent in all their compositions, & even in their Jocundities, together with a little more Ayre, there was a grave tendency as in old Walsingham, Chiveot

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jeers at the other and it has no understanding of what either stood for.

The rise of the Public Concert during the eighteenth century is an allied phenomenon. In one sense of course it can be regarded as the bringing of music to the 'masses'—or rather the rising middle class; what is not so often realized is that it became necessary only when the organic life of our musical culture—a life in which the unlettered peasants created melodies like *Greensleaves*, in which both the aristocrat and the artisan took active part in singing and playing madrigals and fancies of Byrd and Weelkes and Wilbye, and in which all classes heard the music of Byrd in their church services—had all but passed away. The middle class origins of the public concert are delightfully described by Roger North ('the first attempt was low; a project of old Banister, who was a good violin and a theatrical composer. He opened an obscure room in a publick hous at whyte fryars'), and many of his incidental criticisms of the evils consequent on a passive musical culture are as pertinent to-day as when he wrote them. ('One thing I dislike is the laying too much stress upon some one voyce, which is purchased at a dear rate. Were it not as well if somewhat of that were abated & added to the rest to bring the orchestra to a neerer equality? Many persons come to hear that single voyce, who care not for all the rest, especially if it be a fair Lady; and observing ye discourse of ye Quallity crittiques, I found it most upon ye point Who sings best? and not whither ye musick be good, and wherein?'). He wisely observes that the 'broken incoherent parts' of the concert programmes, and the decline of the *general level* of technical competence in, and knowledge of, music are related phenomena: we may note, as a sign of the times, that Lord Chesterfield, in his advice to his son, grants that a Gentleman may occasionally listen to music but states that it does not befit his dignity (and perhaps his manliness) to take part in the performance of it. In the long run a passive musical culture must inevitably be frivolous; how much so we shall realize if we place Byrd's remark that 'the better the voyce is, the meeter it is to honour and serve God therewith' alongside Bach's 'Music is an harmonious euphony to the glory of God' and in opposition to the statement of Dr. Burney (significantly primarily an historian and not a creative musician) that music is 'an Innocent Luxury, unnecessary indeed to our Existence, but a great Improvement and Gratification of the sense of Hearing'. I think not only

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Chase, with innumerable songs of Robin Hood, and most of our oldest ballads and country dances, which were but the celebrated tunes of the time'. This of course is meant to be disapproving; but it is clear that North fully understood the significance of his remark that in the sixteenth century 'want of Instruments made regular learning to sing to be ye ordinarry musicall discipline, & I must needs say that even now the want of it is one of ye fatall Defects of ye present masters & their teaching'.

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William Byrd and his contemporaries but also Lully and Racine would have found this account of music both peculiar and shocking.

With the decay of any sense of music's 'moral' significance—its significance in terms of human life—it isn't surprising that when Handel brought the Italian opera to England the English tradition, what was left of it, should have been totally unable to assimilate it. Lully and then Rameau had absorbed the Italian influence into an idiom both native and European; Dowland had absorbed Italian elements into a lyrical sense rooted in English folk-song; to a point, Purcell had done the same. Handel himself, more cosmopolitan than any of them, had not finally cut himself off from his roots; as a foreigner he could not himself help English composers to incorporate the new theatre music into their own, and there were no English composers either endowed with the appropriate talent or sufficiently interested in the problem. Handel was a business man. If the Italian opera wouldn't sell, he must find something that would. What he found was the oratorio.

There were several reasons why Handel's choice of the oratorio (which had also first been developed in Italy by men like Carissimi) was a cunning one. He had to deal with the rising middle class public which was mainly passive and trained, not on a dramatic tradition, but on the realistic novel. This public was not prepared to accept any fanciful operatic stylizations—at least such stylizations and the castrati had only a transitory notoriety value; but a dramatic music in the concert hall could be accepted as easily as a concert proper, perhaps more easily if the composer knew how to give his public the kind of dramatic emotions which they'd like vicariously to indulge in. Handel knew the public's pulse expertly; he made little or no attempt to achieve inflectional subtlety in his line or to achieve any organic relation between that line and the English language which he never learned to speak adequately; but at the expense of melodic subtlety he reduced to their rudiments the clear symmetrical proportions of the classic continental 'shapes' with their few simple modulations, their noble diatonic harmonic perorations, and produced an idiom exactly suited to the temper of the era of the Roast Beef of Old England and imperialist expansion. It was done with superb genius of course; but it finally polished off what little was left of the native tradition. It gave a passive audience a good square tune to sing and a general feeling of harmonic solidity and physical well-being; but it had no real relation to the English language or the English musical tradition,[4] and no such relation was either

[4]The Chandos Anthems are Handel's closest approach to a reconciliation of his Lutheran roots, his Italinate training, and the native conventions of Purcell, though he never understood how Purcell's melodic sense *grew out of* the language, and having hit on a good swinging tune, was content to let the words fit in as best they may. For an excellent account of the relation, or lack of it, between Purcell and Handel, see H. C. Colles's *Voice and Verse*. (O.U.P.).

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wanted or missed. (For of course Handel was in no way personally responsible for what happened; he merely cashed in on a situation which was developing before he came to this country). So the English went on lustily singing while they forgot what singing their own language sensitively really entails. Handel's idiom is essentially a matter of the instrumental harmonic period; being such it has a further advantage for minor composers in that it is extremely easy to imitate. What Handel does always with vigour and sometimes with great imaginative genius, the average hack can turn out with endlessly vapid facility. The hack music of the sixteenth century is often dull and that of the seventeenth often tentative but, in touch with the civilized values of a great tradition, it never produces the impression of emotional and moral vacuousness which that of the eighteenth century gives rise to. It need hardly be added that Handel's own significance is in no way affected by the ineptitude of his English imitators; though the limiting sense in which he is, compared with Bach, 'of his age' is attested by the more 'harmonic' nature—harmonically dictated, that is—of his fugal writing.

Now of course it would be misleading to suggest that all eighteenth-century English music is vapid. Some work of Greene has exceptional vitality: and such work of Joseph Gibbs as is accessible—particularly the quite well-known D minor violin sonata—would lead one to believe that Gibbs may be a composer of first-rate importance, for this sonata is a magnificent work worthy to rank with Handel's own Italian violin sonatas, and in the allemande manifesting a closeness of texture, a combination of passion with discipline, which is almost Bachian. (The passionate but incisive recitative section is also very remarkable). Gibbs's work should certainly be more thoroughly investigated; and it is quite possible that there may be other as yet neglected composers knowledge of whose work might lead us to modify somewhat our impression of eighteenth-century musical culture. I do not think, however, that the modifications would be more than incidental; and the case of Thomas Roseingrave certainly throws a revealingly corroborative light on the situation as already presented.

It may be merely a coincidence that this extraordinary man, who was born in 1690 and became organist of St. George's, Hanover Square, in 1725, was intermittently crazy; but it is a coincidence that has a kind of symbolical appropriateness. Before his mental infirmity seriously afflicted him he acquired a considerable reputation as an organ virtuoso, teacher and pedagogue; but as a composer he was always regarded by the orthodox—by established opinion—as beyond the pale. Dr. Burney strongly disapproved of his 'harsh and ungrateful harmony and extravagant and licentious modulations' and the historian Hawkins found his 'style both of playing and composing harsh and disgusting, manifesting great learning, but void of elegance and variety'. Alone among composers of his generation Roseingrave seems to have been almost completely impervious to Handel's influence, one or two

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perfunctory full closes apart. The continental composer whom he admired above all others was Domenico Scarlatti (he met him in his youth, produced an opera of his in London, and edited some of his harpsichord sonatas for an English publisher); and it is Scarlatti's relatively bold, sophisticated baroque idiom that he mates with the native traditions of Purcell. His aggressive false relations, minor ninths, chromaticisms, melodically derived augmented intervals and abstruse shifts of tonality are immediately intelligible if seen in relation not to Handel but to Purcell and the finest work of William Young. He alone preserved the authentic English tradition; and his contemporaries had no use for him, and he was mad. To a point of course Dr. Burney was right; his idiom is 'extravagant' in the sense that it is not classically mature, but how could it be without any social or religious sanction? (Scarlatti's idiom is harmonically and rhythmically quite as daring but attains a ripeness of realization which is beyond the Englishman). What one can say is that Roseingrave's immature technique is vitally alive; whereas the 'classical' idiom of the English eighteenth century is dead and stuffed. It seems to me clear that, but for the break in our culture's continuity, Roseingrave would have been a great composer.

The academic objections to Roseingrave's Science and Learning have another sinister implication; they mark the beginning of a desire to 'make things easy' which has progressively increased until the present day. The most conspicuous eighteenth-century example is the performance in 1742 of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with 'Songs by Mrs. Arne, accompanied on the violin by Mr. Arne, who will introduce Comic Interludes, intended to give Relief to that Grave Attention necessary to be kept up in Serious Performances'. The divorce between Art and Entertainment is indeed established; and is further corroborated by Hawkins' Preface to the Second Edition of Boyce's Cathedral Music which points out that composers 'who are to live by the favour of the public have two styles of composition: the one for their own private delight, the other for the gratification of the many'. Such an attitude is now more or less universally accepted; but William Byrd would have thought it odd in the extreme. It is perhaps worth mentioning too, grateful though we must be to Boyce for preserving, for cathedral use, our great polyphonic church music, that it is from his collection that the 'museum' interest in 'old' music dates. (Boyce showed of course a complete inability to appreciate the nature of sixteenth century technique; by the time he had 'corrected' the harmonies and ironed out the rhythms to fit the rigid eighteenth century barlines it is not surprising that he found the music dull).

Gradually mammoth performances of the *Messiah* were elevated to a rite, became of kind of nationalistic substitute for religious experience. But the eulogy of the Chosen Race (which so cunningly guides Popular Sentiment in the interests of the Ruling Classes) is at least sung in the *Messiah* with a manly gusto, just as the more talented Handelian composers such as Boyce are, if not very

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subtle, at least vigorous and clean in sentiment. But as the century unfolds the sentimentalism of Arne and Dibden grows more and more pervasive. Our vocal music, cut off from the 'thews and sinew of the English language', droops into the rounded curves of prettiness; nor could a strong instrumental tradition be developed without roots in the native ways of melodic thought, without the operatic transition. There may be a very practical reason for the importance of continuity in musical traditions in that whereas the poet works in a language which is basically that of everyday communication, the musician uses a language which entails a good deal of specialized 'apparatus'. Otherwise we might have expected a musical 'revival', using the personal-dramatic medium of the instrumental sonata, analogous to the 'personal' revival (in which the communing of the individual sensibility with Nature plays so significant a part) of Blake, Wordsworth, Turner and the rest. But even with an artist of revolt against orthodoxy, like Beethoven, it is necessary that the orthodoxy should *mean something*, if the revolt is to impress: and if he asserts his ego, in opposition to society and the world, we need to be convinced that his ego is worth asserting. At the beginning of the nineteenth century English composers had too long lost contact with any honesty of musical thought (for how could they be honest if their idiom was cliché and foreign cliché at that) for their little egos to be worth bothering about. So their cliché got sloppier and soppier as industrialism grew more rampant and as the influence of Handel was superseded by that of another foreigner, Mendelssohn. The only distinguished composer we produced in the second half of the eighteenth century, Samuel Wesley, dissipated most of his energy in the manufacture of masses of Handelian instrumental cliché, and concentrated his genius in a small body of vocal polyphonic works for the Catholic ritual which are directly if belatedly in the sixteenth century tradition—an idiom utterly remote from the sonata idiom which one would have expected to be the natural product of Wesley's period.[5] The element of retreat which is latent in Wesley's motets, powerful as they are, becomes explicit in the work of the only talented composer we produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. For John Field was an Irishman who worked, dismally unhappy, in a London music shop, fled to Russia, wrote nostalgic piano nocturnes in an idiom derived from the Italian *bel canto* of Bellini, and died in dissipation and exile. The artist's isolation, already noticeable in Roseingrave, has now assumed both biographically and musically, a fairy-tale-like unreality.

There is a curious double-faced quality about English culture in the nineteenth century. On the one hand religion (and the

[5]It is interesting that though Haydn and Mozart were quite frequently played in London in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they exerted next to no influence on our composers, who were unable to assimilate their dramatic implications; hence the legend of the 'child-like' Mozart and of 'old Papa' Haydn.

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oratorio) was used to back up essentially materialistic attitudes (*cf.* G.B.S. 'Mendelssohn, who was shocked at Auber's writing an opera in which a girl sang *Oui c'est demain* (meaning Tomorrow I shall be a bride) at her looking glass before going to bed, was himself ready to serve up the chopping to pieces of the prophets of the grove with his richest musical spice to suit the compound of sanctimonious cruelty and base materialism which his patrons, the British Pharisees, called their religion . . .'). On the other hand there was an increasing tendency to pretend that the uglier materialistic aspects of industrial civilization just didn't exist. The Tennysonian poetic tradition is an obvious case, and it is symptomatic that Tennyson should have deliberately aimed at making the English language as much like Italian as possible. He did not want an idiom that had any serious relation to contemporary life; his Italianate diction is adequate to express his limited vein of personal nostalgia ('I am aweary, aweary'), but his 'social' interests he is unable to experience poetically at all, they are not part of his poetic experience but merely a bundle of good intentions. William Morris and Matthew Arnold, who had first-rate minds and a broad and comprehensive attitude to the problems of the nineteenth century, were totally unable to reconcile the intelligent interests exemplified in their prose with the elegiac nostalgia of their poetic experience. The 'strange disease of modern life' is something beyond their spiritual digestions; it is not surprising that Tennyson's—and for that matter Browning's—attempts at poetic drama should be so pathetically flat and sterile. It is worth noting that Gerard Hopkins, who had so little direct contact with Victorian industrialism and had virtually no audience, was the only poet of his time who had a natural dramatic gift—who maintained the native language as spoken (however heightened) and the true Shakespearean tradition, and who could have written poetic drama if there'd been sufficient cultural unity and creativity for anybody to want it.[6]

From the point of view of the Victorian fairy-tale the evolution of the novel-reading habit links up pertinently with music. The novel had begun with Defoe as a realistic portrayal of the life of the rising middle class, albeit based on circumstantial evidence; through the nineteenth century it increasingly became a substitute *for* life rather than a portrayal of it; and the escapist novels of Scott achieve an extraordinary popularity as material for the librettos of Italian opera composers. For a time there was a considerable English vogue for such things, though the English public always felt a bit unhappy about the ambiguous (realistic fairy-tale) convention. Gilbert and Sullivan made them feel happier by relating the convention to the ballad opera and therefore, in a superficial way, to the life they were familiar with; and then the

[6]Significantly, he was also one of the very few men of his time who had an intelligent and informed interest in our native musical tradition—in Purcell and the sixteenth century.

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convention split into the honest-to-goodness vulgarity of the music-hall and the tawdry glamour of the musical comedy (to this day productions like *The Desert Song* are still surprisingly popular, and of them Hollywood musicals are only a chromium plated version). The cycle is interesting: in the seventeenth century we failed to achieve a stylization which could convey coherently the attitudes of contemporary society; in the eighteenth century our musical conventions were reduced to a kind of lowest common denominator and stylizations were despised as inherently absurd (*cf.* Johnson's famous definition of opera as 'an Exotick and Irrational Entertainment'); and then in the nineteenth century the ugliness of contemporary life led artists to seek a stylization which, instead of being a microcosm of social attitudes, was a conscious or unconscious attempt to retreat from life altogether. Being based at best on reality, at worst on hypocrisy, it was inevitable that such a stylization should grow progressively cruder and more spiritually benighted. In one sense one might say that in Victorian England one is less conscious of what one usually regards as a representative nineteenth-century trend—the tendency of the artist and the people to become further separated—than one is in the second half of the eighteenth century; because what happened is that the appalling level of taste absorbed both 'people' and 'artists' more or less impartially. There is not much to choose in point of value between Stainer's *Crucifixion* (it is interesting—with reference to our remarks about the poets—that Stainer was a first class theoretical musician and an exemplary editor of mediæval music) and any typical Victorian musical comedy (*The Desert Song* is in the same line);[7] it is only at the very end of the century when our cultural consciousness begins tentatively to stir again, that the split becomes obvious. Nor is it surprising that the second birth pangs should have been difficult and painful, for in thirty or forty years we have had to catch up on two hundred years of musical evolution.

W. H. MELLERS.

[7] *Cf.* Shaw: 'set all that dreary fugue manufacture, with its Sunday-school sentimentalities and music school ornamentalities, against your recollection of the expressive and vigorous choruses of Handel and ask yourself on your honour whether there is the slightest difference in kind between *Stone him to Death* and *Under the Pump with a kick and a thump from Dorothy*'.

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REVALUATIONS (XV):

GEORGE ELIOT (I)

THERE is general agreement that an appraisal of George Eliot must be a good deal preoccupied with major discriminations—that the body of her work exhibits within itself striking differences not merely of kind, but between the more and the less satisfactory, and exhibits them in such a way that the history of her art has to be seen as something less happy in its main lines than just an unfolding of her genius, a prosperous development of her distinctive powers, with growing maturity. It is generally assumed that this aspect of her performance is significantly related to the fact of her having displayed impressive intellectual gifts outside her art, so that she was a distinguished figure in the world of Herbert Spencer and the *Westminster Review* before she became a novelist. And there is something like a unanimity to the effect that it is distinctive of her, among great novelists, to be peculiarly addicted to moral preoccupations.

The force of this last—what it amounts to or intends, and the significance it has for criticism—is elusive; and it seems well to start with a preliminary glance at what, from his hours with the critics, the reader is likely to recall as a large established blur across the field of vision. Henry James seems to me to have shown finer intelligence than anyone else in writing about George Eliot, and he, in his review of the Cross *Life* of her, tells us that, for her, the novel 'was not primarily a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but a moralized fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavouring to teach by example'.[1] The blur is seen here in that misleading antithesis, which, illusory as it is, James's commentary insists on. What, we ask, is the 'form' from which a 'picture of life' derives its value? As we should expect, the term 'aesthetic', with its trail of confusion, turns up in the neighbourhood (it is a term the literary critic would do well to abjure). James notes, as characterizing 'that side of George Eliot's nature which was weakest' the 'absence of free aesthetic life', and he says that her 'figures and situations' are 'not *seen* in the irresponsible plastic way'. But, we ask, in what great, in what interesting, novel *are* the figures and situations seen in an 'irresponsible plastic way' (a useful determination of one of the intentions of 'aesthetic')? Is there any great novelist whose preoccupation with 'form' is not a matter of his responsibility towards a rich human interest, or complexity of interests, profoundly realized?—a responsibility involving, of its very nature, imaginative sympathy, moral discrimination and judgment of relative human value?

[1] *Partial Portraits*, p. 50.

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The art distinguished by the corresponding irresponsibility might be supposed to be represented by the dreary brilliance of *Salammbô* and *La Tentation*. But we know that this is so far from James's intention that he finds even *Madame Bovary*, much as he admires it, an instance of a preoccupation with 'form' that is insufficiently a preoccupation with human value and moral interest.[1] In fact, his verdict on *Madame Bovary* may fairly be taken to be of no very different order from that implied when George Eliot finds *Le Père Goriot* 'a hateful book'—the phrase that, curiously enough, provides the occasion for James's remarks about her lack of 'free aesthetic life'.[2]

That the antithesis I quote from Henry James is unsatisfactory and doesn't promote clear thinking is no doubt obvious enough. And the reader may note that James's essay dates sixty years back. Yet his handling of the matter seems to me representative: I don't know of anything written about George Eliot that, touching on this matter of her distinctive moral preoccupation, does anything essentially more helpful towards defining the distinctive quality of her art. James, then, is a critic one reads with close attention, and, coming on so challenging a formulation in so intelligent a context, one is provoked to comment that, while, among the great novelists, George Eliot must certainly have her difference, it can hardly be of the kind such an antithetical way of putting things suggests. Though such formulations may have their colourable grounds, there must, one reflects, be something more important to say about the moral seriousness of George Eliot's novels; otherwise she would hardly be the great novelist one knows her to be. There are certain conditions of art from which she cannot be exempt while remaining an artist.

A tentative comparison or two may help to define the direction in which the appraising critic should turn his inquiries. Consider her against, not Flaubert, but two novelists concerning whose greatness one has no uneasy sense of a need to hedge. In her own language she ranks with Jane Austen and Conrad, both of whom, in their different ways, present sharp contrasts with her. To take

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[1]See his essay on Flaubert in *Notes on Novelists*.

[2]I had better say that my judgment of *Le Père Goriot* clearly differs from Henry James's. The impressiveness of the famous passions Balzac presents seems to me to be too much of the order of Shelley's

> *Beatrice* (*wildly*) O
> My God! Can it be possible . . . *etc.*

Balzac's art here seems to me an essentially rhetorical art in a pejorative sense of the adjective: romantic rhetoric is the life and spirit of the sublimities and degradations he exhibits. They depend for their effect, that is, not on any profound realization of human emotions, but on excited emphasis, top-level assertion and explicit insistence.

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Conrad first: there is no novelist of whom it can more fitly be said that his figures and situations are *seen*, and James would have testified to his intense and triumphant preoccupation with '*form*'.[3] He went to school to the French masters, and is in the tradition of Flaubert. But he is a greater novelist than Flaubert because of the greater range and depth of his interest in humanity and the greater intensity of his moral preoccupation: he is not open to the kind of criticism that Conrad brings against *Madame Bovary*. *Nostromo* is a masterpiece of 'form' in senses of the term congenial to the discussion of Flaubert's art, but to appreciate Conrad's 'form' is to take stock of a process of relative valuation conducted by him in the face of life: what do men live by? what *can* men live by?—these are the questions that animate his theme. His organization is devoted to exhibiting in the concrete a representative set of radical attitudes, so ordered as to bring out the significance of each in relation to a total sense of human life. The dramatic imagination at work is an intensely moral imagination, the vividness of which is inalienably a judging and a valuing. With such economy has each 'figure' and 'situation' its significance in a taut inclusive scheme that *Nostromo* might more reasonably than any of George Eliot's fictions except *Silas Marner* (which has something of the fairy-tale about it, and is in any case a minor work) be called a 'moralized fable'.

What, then, in this matter of the relation between their moral interests and their art, is the difference between Conrad and George Eliot? (Their sensibilities, of course, differ, but that is not the question). I had better here give the whole of the sentence of James's of which above I quoted a part:

> 'Still, what even a jotting may *not* have said after a first perusal of *Le Père Goriot* is eloquent; it illuminates the author's general attitude with regard to the novel, which, for her, was not primarily a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but a moralized fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavouring to teach by example'.

—To find the difference in didactism doesn't take us very far; not much to the point is said about a work of art in calling it didactic—unless one is meaning to judge it adversely. In that case one is judging that the intention to communicate an attitude hasn't become sufficiently more than an intention; hasn't, that is, justified itself as art in the realized concreteness that speaks for itself and *enacts* its moral significance. But whatever criticism the weaker parts of George Eliot may lie open to no one is going to characterize her by an inclusive judgment of that kind. And it is her greatness we are concerned with.

James speaks of a 'philosophy endeavouring to teach by example': perhaps, it may be suggested, the clue we want is to

[3]Actually James salutes *Chance* in *The New Novel*, an article written in 1914 (see *Notes on Novelists*).

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be found in the 'philosophy'? And the context shows that James does, in attempting to define her peculiar quality, intend to stress George Eliot's robust powers of intellectual labour and her stamina in the realm of abstract thought—he speaks elsewhere of her 'exemption from cerebral lassitude'. But actually it is not easy to see how, in so far as her intellectual distinction appears in the strength of her art, it constitutes an essential difference between her and Conrad. She has no more of a philosophy than he has, and he, on the other hand, is, in his work, clearly a man of great intelligence and confirmed intellectual habit, whose 'picture of life' embodies much reflective analysis and sustained thought about fundamentals.

What can, nevertheless, be said, with obvious truth, is that Conrad is more completely an artist. It is not that he had no intellectual career outside his art—that he did nothing comparable to translating Strauss, Spinoza and Feuerbach, and editing *The Westminster Review*. It is that he transmutes more completely into the created work the interests he brings in. No doubt the two facts are related: the fact that he was novelist and seaman and not novelist and high-level intellectual middleman has a bearing on the fact that he achieved a wholeness in art (it will be observed that the change of phrase involves a certain change of force, but the shift is legitimate, I think) not characteristic of George Eliot. But it must not be concluded that the point about her is that her novels contain unabsorbed intellectual elements—patches, say, of tough or drily abstract thinking undigested by her art. The relevant characteristic, rather, is apt to strike the reader as something quite other than toughness or dryness; we note it as an emotional quality, something that strikes us as the direct (and sometimes embarrassing) presence of the author's own personal need. Conrad, we know, had been in his time hard-pressed; the evidence is everywhere in his work, but, in any one of the great novels, it comes to us out of the complex impersonalized whole. There can, of course, be no question of saying simply that the opposite is true of George Eliot: she is a great novelist, and has achieved her triumphs of creative art. Nor is it quite simply a matter of distinguishing between what is strong in her work and what is weak. At her best she has the impersonality of genius, but there is characteristic work of hers that is rightly admired where the quality of the sensibility can often be felt to have intimate relations with her weakness.

That is, the critic appraising her is faced with a task of discrimination. I began by reporting general agreement to this effect. The point of my comparison is to suggest that the discriminating actually needing to be done will be on different lines from those generally assumed.

And that is equally the conclusion prompted by a comparative glance at Jane Austen. Though the fashionable cult tends to suggest otherwise, she doesn't differ from George Eliot by not being earnestly moral. The vitality of her art is a matter of a

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preoccupation with moral problems that is subtle and intense because of the pressure of personal need. As for the essential difference (leaving aside the differences in the nature of the need and in range of interests), is it something that can be related to the fact that Jane Austen, while unmistakably very intelligent, can lay no claim to a massive intellect like George Eliot's, capable of maintaining a specialized intellectual life? Perhaps; but what again strikes us in the intellectual writer is an emotional quality, one to which there is no equivalent in Jane Austen. And it is not merely a matter of a difference of theme and interest—of George Eliot's dealing with (say) the agonized conscience and with religious need as Jane Austen doesn't. There could be this difference without what is as a matter of fact associated with it in George Eliot's work: a tendency towards that kind of direct presence of the author which has to be stigmatized as weakness.

But this is to anticipate.

The large discrimination generally made in respect of George Eliot is a simple one. Henry James's account is subtler than any other I know, but isn't worked out to consistency. He says[4] (though the generalization is implicitly criticized by the context, being inadequate to his perception):

> 'We feel in her, always, that she proceeds from the abstract to the concrete; that her figures and situations are evolved, as the phrase is, from her moral consciousness, and are only indirectly the products of observation'.

What this gives us is, according to the accepted view, one half of her—the unsatisfactory half. The great George Eliot, according to this view, is the novelist of reminiscence; the George Eliot who writes out of her memories of childhood and youth, renders the poignancy and charm of personal experience, and gives us, in a mellow light, the England of her young days, and of the days then still alive in family tradition. Her classics are *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner*. With these books she exhausted her material, and in order to continue a novelist had to bring the other half of herself into play—to hand over, in fact, to the intellectual. *Romola* is the product of an exhausting and misguided labour of excogitation and historical reconstruction (a judgment no one is likely to dispute). *Felix Holt* and *Daniel Deronda* also represent the distinguished intellectual rather than the great novelist; in them she 'proceeds from the abstract to the concrete', 'her figures and situations are evolved from her moral consciousness', they 'are deeply studied and massively supported, but . . .'—Henry James's phrases fairly convey the accepted view.

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[4] *Partial Portraits*, p. 51.

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It should be said at once that he is not to be identified with it (he discriminates firmly, for instance, in respect of *Daniel Deronda*). Still, he expresses for us admirably what has for long been the current idea of her development, and he does in such passages as this endorse the view that, in the later novels, the intellectual gets the upper hand:

> 'The truth is, perception and reflection at the outset divided George Eliot's great talent between them; but as time went on circumstances led the latter to develop itself at the expense of the former—one of these circumstances being apparently the influence of George Henry Lewes'.

And we don't feel that he is inclined to dissociate himself to any significant extent when, in *the Conversation* about *Daniel Deronda*, he makes Constantius say:[5]

> 'She strikes me as a person who certainly has a natural taste for general considerations, but who has fallen upon an age and a circle which have compelled her to give them an exaggerated attention. She does not strike me as naturally a critic, still less as naturally a sceptic; her spontaneous part is to observe life and to feel it, to feel it with admirable depth. Contemplation, sympathy and faith—something like that, I should say, would have been her natural scale'.

At any rate, that gives what appears to be still the established notion of George Eliot.

It will have been noted above that I left out *Middlemarch*. And it will have been commented that *Middlemarch*, which comes in order of production after *Romola* and doesn't at all represent a reversion to the phase of 'spontaneity', has for at least two decades been pretty generally acclaimed as one of the great masterpieces of English fiction. That is true. Virginia Woolf, a good index of cultivated acceptance in that period, writes (in *The Common Reader*, first series):

> 'It is not that her power diminishes, for, to our thinking, it is at its highest in the mature *Middlemarch*, the magnificent book which, with all its imperfections, is one of the few English novels written for grown-up people'.

This judgment, in a characteristic and not very satisfactory essay on George Eliot, must be set to Mrs. Woolf's credit as a critic; there is no doubt that it has had a good deal to do with the established recognition of *Middlemarch*.

But Mrs. Woolf makes no serious attempt at the work of general revision such a judgment implies, and the appreciation of George Eliot's *œuvre* has not been put on a critical basis and reduced to consistency. For if you think so highly of *Middlemarch*, then, to be consistent, you must be more qualified in your praise

[5] *Partial Portraits*, p. 83.

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of the early things than persisting convention recognizes. Isn't there, in fact, a certain devaluing to be done? The key word in that sentence quoted from Mrs. Woolf is 'mature'. Her distinguished father (whose book on George Eliot in *The English Men of Letters* has his characteristic virtues) supplies, in respect of their popularity, the key word for the earlier works when he speaks of a 'loss of charm' involved in her development after *The Mill on the Floss*. At the risk of appearing priggish one may suggest that there is a tendency to overrate charm. Certainly charm is overrated when it is preferred to maturity.

Going back in one's mind over the earlier works, what can one note as their attractions and their claims? There is *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which is to-day, perhaps, not much read. And indeed only with an effort can one appreciate why these stories should have made such an impact when they came out. One of them, *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story*, is charming in a rather slight way. Without the charm the pathos would hardly be very memorable, and the charm is characteristic of the earlier George Eliot: it is the atmospheric richness of the past seen through home tradition and the associations of childhood. Of the other two, *The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton* and *Janet's Repentance*, one feels that they might have appeared in any Victorian family magazine. This is unfair, no doubt; the imaginative and morally earnest sympathy that finds a moving theme in the ordinariness of undistinguished lives—there we have the essential George Eliot; the magazine writer would not have had that touch in pathos and humour, and there is some justice in Leslie Stephen's finding an 'indication of a profoundly reflective intellect' in 'the constant, though not obtrusive, suggestion of the depths below the surface of trivial life'. But *Scenes of Clerical Life* would not have been remembered if nothing had followed.

George Eliot did no more prentice-work (the greater part of the *Scenes* may fairly be called that): *Adam Bede* is unmistakably qualified to be a popular classic—which, in so far as there are such to-day, it still is. There is no need here to offer an appreciation of its attractions; they are as plain as they are genuine, and they have had full critical justice done them. Criticism, it seems to me, is faced with the ungrateful office of asking whether, much as *Adam Bede* deserves its currency as a classic (and of the classical English novels it has been among the most widely read), the implicit valuation it enjoys in general acceptance doesn't represent something more than justice. The point can perhaps be made by suggesting that the book is too much the sum of its specifiable attractions to be among the great novels—that it is too resolvable into the separate interests that we can see the author to have started with. Of these, a main one, clearly, is given in Mrs. Poyser, and that mellow presentation of rustic life as George Eliot recalled it from her childhood for which Mrs. Poyser's kitchen is the centre. This deserves all the admiration it has received. And this is the moment to say that juxtaposition with George Eliot is a test that

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disposes finally of the 'Shakespearean' Hardy: if the adjective is to be used at all, it applies much more fitly to the rich creativeness of the art that seems truly to draw its sap from life and is free from all suspicion of Shakespeareanizing. George Eliot's rustic life is convincingly real even when most charming (and she doesn't always mellow her presentation of it with charm).

We have another of the main interests with which George Eliot started in Dinah, that idealized recollection of the Methodist aunt. Dinah, a delicate undertaking, is sufficiently successful, but one has, in appraising her in relation to the total significance of the book, to observe, with a stress on the limiting implications of the word, that the success is conditioned by the 'charm' that invests her as it does the world she moves in and belongs to. She is idealized as Adam is idealized; they are in keeping. Adam, we know, is a tribute to her father; but he is also the Ideal Craftsman, embodying the Dignity of Labour. He too is *réussi*, but compare him with George Eliot's other tribute to her father, Caleb Garth of *Middlemarch*, who is in keeping with *his* context, and the suggestion that the idealizing element in the book named after Adam involves limiting judgments for the critic gets, I think, an obvious force.

Mrs. Poyser, Dinah and Adam—these three represent interests that George Eliot wanted to use in a novel. To make a novel out of them she had to provide something else. The Dinah theme entails the scene in prison, and so there had to be a love-story and a seduction. George Eliot works them into her given material with convincing skill; the entanglement of Arthur Donnithorne with Hetty Sorrel—the first casual self-indulgence, the progressive yielding to temptation, the inexorable Nemesis—involves a favourite moral-psychological theme of hers, and she handles it in a personal way. And yet—does one want ever to read that large part of the book again? does it gain by re-reading? doesn't this only confirm one's feeling that, while as Victorian fiction—a means of passing the time—the love-story must be granted its distinction, yet, judged by the expectations with which one approaches a great novelist, it offers nothing proportionate to the time it takes (even if we cut the large amount of general reflection)? Satisfactory at its own level as the unity is that the author has induced in her materials, there is not at work in the whole any pressure from her profounder experience to compel an inevitable development; so that we don't feel moved to discuss with any warmth whether or not she was right to take Lewes's suggestion, and whether or not Dinah *would* really have become Mrs. Adam Bede. We are not engaged in such a way as to give any force to the question whether the marriage is convincing or otherwise; there is no sense of inevitability to outrage. These comments of Henry James's seem to me just:

> 'In *Silas Marner*, in *Adam Bede*, the quality seems gilded by a sort of autumn haze, an afternoon light, of meditation,

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> which mitigates the sharpness of the portraiture. I doubt very much whether the author herself had a clear vision, for instance, of the marriage of Dinah Morris to Adam, or of the rescue of Hetty from the scaffold at the eleventh hour. The reason of this may be, indeed, that her perception was a perception of nature much more than of art, and that these particular incidents do not belong to nature (to my sense at least); by which I do not mean that they belong to a very happy art. I cite them, on the contrary, as an evidence of artistic weakness; they are a very good example of the view in which a story must have marriages and rescues in the nick of time, as a matter of course'.

James indicates here the relation between the charm and what he calls the 'art'. They are not identical, of course; but what I have called 'charm' and described as an idealizing element means an abeyance of the profounder responsibility, so that, without being shocked, we can have together in the same book the 'art' to which James refers—the vaguely realized that draws its confidence from convention, and such genuinely moving things as the story of Hetty Sorrell's wanderings. And here I will anticipate and make the point that it is because the notorious scandal of Stephen Guest in *The Mill on the Floss* has nothing to do with 'art', but is a different kind of thing altogether, that it is interesting and significant.

It is a related point that if 'charm' prevails in *Adam Bede* (and, as Henry James indicates, in *Silas Marner*), there should be another word for what we find in *The Mill on the Floss*. The fresh directness of a child's vision that we have there, in the autobiographical part, is something very different from the 'afternoon light' of reminiscence. This recaptured early vision, in its combination of clarity with rich 'significance', is for us, no doubt, enchanting; but it doesn't idealize, or soften with a haze of sentiment (and it can't consort with 'art'). Instead of Mrs. Poyser and her setting we have the uncles and aunts. The bearing of the change is plain if we ask whether there could have been a Dinah in this company. Could there have been an Adam? They both belong to a different world.

In fact, the Gleggs and the Pullets and the Dodson clan associate, not with the frequenters of Mrs. Poyser's kitchen, but with the tribe that forgathers at Stone Court waiting for Peter Featherstone to die. The intensity of Maggie's naïve vision is rendered with the convincing truth of genius; but the rendering brings in the intelligence that goes with the genius and is *of* it, and the force of the whole effect is the product of understanding. This is an obvious enough point. I make it because I want to observe that, although the supremely mature mind of *Middlemarch* is not yet manifested in *The Mill on the Floss*, the creative powers at work here owe their successes as much to a very fine intelligence as to powers of feeling and remembering—a fact that, even if it is an obvious one, the customary stress nevertheless leaves unattended to, though it is one that must get its full value if

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George Eliot's development is to be understood. I will underline it by saying that the presentment of the Dodson clan is of marked sociological interest—not accidentally, but because of the intellectual qualifications of the novelist.

But of course the most striking quality of *The Mill on the Floss* is that which goes with the strong autobiographical element. It strikes us as an emotional tone. We feel an urgency, a resonance, a personal vibration, adverting us of the poignantly immediate presence of the author. Since the vividness, the penetration and the irresistible truth of the best of the book are clearly bound up with this quality, to suggest that it also entails limitations that the critic cannot ignore, since they in turn are inseparable from disastrous weaknesses in George Eliot's handling of her themes, is perhaps a delicate business. But the case is so: the emotional quality represents something, a need or hunger in George Eliot, that shows itself to be insidious company for her intelligence—apt to supplant it and take command. The acknowledged weaknesses and faults of *The Mill on the Floss*, in fact, are of a more interesting kind than the accepted view recognizes.

That Maggie Tulliver is essentially identical with the young Mary Ann Evans we all know. She has the intellectual potentiality for which the environment into which she is born doesn't provide much encouragement; she has the desperate need for affection and intimate personal relations; and above all she has the need for an emotional exaltation, a religious enthusiasm, that shall transfigure the ordinariness of daily life and sweep her up in an inspired devotion of self to some ideal purpose. There is, however, a difference between Maggie Tulliver and Mary Ann Evans: Maggie is beautiful. She is triumphantly beautiful, after having been the ugly duckling. The experience of a sensitive child in this latter rôle among insensitive adults is evoked with great poignancy: George Eliot had only to remember.[6] The glow that comes with imagining the duckling turned swan hardly needs analysing; it can be felt in every relevant page, and it is innocent enough. But it is intimately related to things in the book that common consent finds deplorable, and it is necessary to realize this in order to realize their nature and significance and see what the weaknesses of *The Mill on the Floss* really are.

There is Stephen Guest, who is universally recognized to be a sad lapse on George Eliot's part. He is a more significant lapse, I think, than criticism commonly allows. Here is Leslie Stephen (*George Eliot*, p. 104):

> 'George Eliot did not herself understand what a mere hairdresser's block she was describing in Mr. Stephen Guest. He is another instance of her incapacity for portraying the opposite

[6]G.E.'s painful consciouness, persisting in adult life, of her lack of beauty, can be strikingly illustrated from the biographical material.

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> sex. No man could have introduced such a character without perceiving what an impression must be made upon his readers. We cannot help regretting Maggie's fate; she is touching and attractive to the last; but I, at least, cannot help wishing that the third volume could have been suppressed. I am inclined to sympathize with the readers of *Clarissa Harlowe* when they entreated Richardson to save Lovelace's soul. Do, I mentally exclaim, save this charming Maggie from damning herself by this irrelevant and discordant degradation'.

That the presentment of Stephen Guest is unmistakably feminine no one will be disposed to deny, but not only is the assumption of a general incapacity refuted by a whole gallery of triumphs, Stephen himself is sufficiently 'there' to give the drama a convincing force. Animus against him for his success with Maggie and exasperation with George Eliot for allowing it shouldn't lead us to dispute that plain fact—they don't really amount to a judgment of his unreality. To call him a 'mere hairdresser's block' is to express a valuation—a valuation extremely different from George Eliot's. And if we ourselves differ from her in the same way (who doesn't?), we must be careful about the implication of the adjective when we agree that her valuation is surprising. For Leslie Stephen Maggie's entanglement with Stephen Guest is an 'irrelevant and discordant degradation'.—Irrelevant to what and discordant with what?—

> 'The whole theme of the book is surely the contrast between the "beautiful soul" and the commonplace surroundings. It is the awakening of the spiritual and imaginative nature and the need of finding some room for the play of the higher faculties, whether in the direction of religious mysticism or of human affection'.

—It is bad enough that the girl who is distinguished not only by beauty but by intelligence should be made to fall for a provincial dandy; the scandal or incredibility (runs the argument) becomes even worse when we add that she is addicted to Thomas à Kempis and has an exalted spiritual nature. Renunciation is a main theme in her history and in her daily meditations; but—when temptation takes the form of Mr. Stephen Guest! It is incredible, or insufferable in so far we have to accept it, for temptation at this level can have nothing to do with the theme of renunciation as we have become familiar with it in Maggie's spiritual life—it is 'irrelevant and discordant'. This is the position.

Actually, the soulful side of Maggie, her hunger for ideal exaltations, as it is given us in the earlier part of the book, is just what should make us say, on reflection, that her weakness for Stephen Guest is not so surprising after all. It is commonly accepted, this soulful side of Maggie, with what seems to me a remarkable absence of criticism. It is offered by George Eliot

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herself—and this of course is the main point—with a remarkable absence of criticism. There *is*, somewhere, a discordance, a discrepancy, a failure to reduce things to a due relevance: it is a characteristic and significant failure in George Eliot. It is a discordance, not between her ability to present Maggie's yearnings and her ability to present Stephen Guest as an irresistible temptation, but between her presentment of those yearnings on the one hand and her own distinction of intelligence on the other.

That part of Maggie's make-up is done convincingly enough; it is done from the inside. One's criticism is that it is done too purely from the inside. Maggie's emotional and spiritual stresses, her exaltations and renunciations, exhibit, naturally, all the marks of immaturity; they involve confusions and immature valuations; they belong to a stage of development at which the capacity to make some essential distinctions has not yet been arrived at—at which the poised impersonality that is one of the conditions of being able to make them can't be achieved. There is nothing against George Eliot's presenting this immaturity with tender sympathy; but we ask, and ought to ask, of a great novelist something more. 'Sympathy and understanding' is the common formula of praise, but understanding, in any strict sense, is just what she doesn't show. To understand immaturity would be to 'place' it, with however subtle an implication, by relating it to mature experience. But when George Eliot touches on these given intensities of Maggie's inner life the vibration comes directly and simply from the novelist, precluding the presence of a maturer intelligence than Maggie's own. It is in these places that we are most likely to make with conscious critical intent the comment that in George Eliot's presentment of Maggie there is an element of self-idealization. The criticism sharpens itself when we say that with the self-idealization there goes an element of self-pity. George Eliot's attitude to her own immaturity as represented by Maggie is the reverse of a mature one.

Maggie Tulliver, in fact, represents an immaturity that George Eliot never leaves safely behind her. We have it wherever we have this note, and where it prevails her intelligence and mature judgment are out of action:

> 'Maggie in her brown frock, with her eyes reddened and her heavy hair pushed back, looking from the bed where her father lay, to the dull walls of this sad chamber which was the centre of her world, was a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirsty for all knowledge; with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come nearer to her; with a blind unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it'.[7]

[7] *The Mill on the Floss*, Book III, Chapter V, the end.

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This 'blind, unconscious yearning' never, for all the intellectual contacts it makes as Maggie grows up and from which it acquires a sense of consciousness, learns to understand itself: Maggie remains quite naïve about its nature. She is quite incapable of analysing it into the varied potentialities it associates. In the earlier part of the book, from which the passage just quoted comes, the religious and idealistic aspect of the yearning is not complicated by any disconcerting insurgence from out of the depths beneath its vagueness. But with that passage compare this:

> 'In poor Maggie's highly-strung, hungry nature—just come away from a third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty round of tasks—these apparently trivial causes had the effect of rousing and exalting her imagination in a way that was mysterious to herself. It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr. Stephen Guest, or dwelt on the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather that she felt the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries'.[8]

The juxtaposition of the two passages makes us revert to a sentence quoted above from Leslie Stephen, and see in it a hint that he, pretty plainly, missed:

> 'It is the awakening of the spiritual and imaginative nature and the need of finding some room for the play of the higher faculties, whether in the direction of religious mysticism or of human affection'.

—For the second alternative we need to couple with 'religious mysticism' a phrase more suggestive of emotional intensity than Leslie Stephen's. And we then can't help asking whether the 'play of the higher faculties' that is as intimately associated with a passion for Stephen Guest as the two last-quoted paragraphs together bring out can be as purely concerned with the 'higher' as Maggie and George Eliot believe (unchallenged, it seems, by Leslie Stephen).

Obviously there is a large lack of self-knowledge in Maggie—a very natural one, but shared, more remarkably, by George Eliot. Maggie, it is true, has the most painful throes of conscience and they ultimately prevail. But she has no sense that Stephen Guest (apart, of course, from the insufficient strength of moral fibre betrayed under the strain of temptation—and it is to Maggie he succumbs) is not worthy of her spiritual and idealistic nature. There is no hint that, if Fate had allowed them to come together innocently, she wouldn't have found him a pretty satisfactory soul-mate; there, for George Eliot, lies the tragedy—it is conscience opposes. Yet the ordinary nature of the fascination is made quite plain:

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[8]Book VI, Chapter III, third paragraph.

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'And then, to have the footstool placed carefully by a too self-confident personage—not any self-confident personage, but one in particular, who suddenly looks humble and anxious, and lingers, bending still, to ask if there is not some draught in that position between the window and the fireplace, and if he may not be allowed to move the work-table for her—these things will summon a little of the too-ready, traitorous tenderness into a woman's eyes, compelled as she is in her girlish time to learn her life-lessons in very trivial language'. (Book VI, Chapter VII).

And it is quite plain that George Eliot shares to the full the sense of Stephen's irresistibleness—the vibration establishes it beyond a doubt:

'For hours Maggie felt as if her struggle had been in vain. For hours every other thought that she strove to summon was thrust aside by the image of Stephen waiting for the single word that would bring him to her. She did not *read* the letter: she heard him uttering it, and the voice shook her with its old strange power . . . And yet that promise of joy in the place of sadness did not make the dire force of the temptation to Maggie. It was Stephen's tone of misery, it was the doubt in the justice of her own resolve, that made the balance tremble, and made her once start from her seat to reach the pen and paper, and write "Come" '.

There is no suggestion of any antipathy between this fascination and Maggie's 'higher faculties', apart from the moral veto that imposes renunciation. The positive counterpart of renunciation in the 'higher' realm to which this last is supposed to belong is the exaltation, transcending all conflicts and quotidian stalenesses, that goes with an irresistibly ideal self-devotion. It is significant that the passages describing such an exaltation, whether as longed for or as attained, and there are many in George Eliot's works, have a close affinity in tone and feeling with this (from the chapter significantly headed, *Borne along by the tide*):

'And they went. Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden among the roses, being helped with firm tender care into the boat, having the cushion and cloak arranged for her feet, and her parasol opened for her (which she had forgotten)—all this by the stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic—and she felt nothing else'. (Book VI, Chapter XIII).

—The satisfaction got by George Eliot from imaginative participation in exalted enthusiasms and self-devotions would, if she could suddenly have gained the power of analysis that in these regions she lacked, have surprised her by the association of elements it represented.

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The passage just quoted gives the start of the expedition with Stephen in which chance, the stream and the tide are allowed, temporarily, to decide Maggie's inner conflict. It has been remarked that George Eliot has a fondness for using boats, water and chance in this way. But there are distinctions to be made. The way in which Maggie, exhausted by the struggle, surrenders to the chance that leaves her to embark alone with Stephen, and then, with inert will, lets the boat carry her down-stream until it is too late, so that the choice seems taken from her and the decision compelled—all this is admirable. *This* is insight and understanding, and comes from the psychologist who is to analyse for us Gwendolen Harleth's acceptance of Grandcourt. But the end of *The Mill on the Floss* belongs to another kind of art. Some might place it under the 'art' referred to by Henry James. And it is certainly a 'dramatic' close of a kind congenial to the Victorian novel-reader. But it has for the critic more significance that this suggests: George Eliot is, emotionally, fully engaged in it. The qualifying 'emotionally' is necessary because of the criticism that has to be urged: something so like a kind of daydream indulgence we are all familiar with could not have imposed itself on the novelist as the right ending if her mature intelligence had been fully engaged, giving her full self-knowledge. The flooded river has no symbolic or metaphorical value. It is only the dreamed-of perfect accident that gives us the opportunity for the dreamed-of heroic act—the act that shall vindicate us against a harshly misjudging world, bring emotional fulfilment and (in others) changes of heart, and provide a gloriously tragic curtain. Not that the sentimental in it is embarrassingly gross, but the finality is not that of great art, and the significance is what I have suggested—a revealed immaturity.

The success of *Silas Marner*, that charming minor masterpiece, is conditioned by the absence of personal immediacy; it is a success of reminiscent and enchanted re-creation: *Silas Marner* has in it, in its solid way, something of the fairy-tale. That 'solid' presents itself because of the way in which the moral fable is realized in terms of a substantial real world. But this, though re-seen through adult experience, is the world of childhood and youth—the world as directly known then, and what is hardly distinguishable from that, the world as known through family reminiscence, conveyed in anecdote and fireside history. The mood of enchanted adult reminiscence blends with the re-captured traditional aura to give the world of *Silar Marner* its atmosphere. And it is this atmosphere that conditions the success of the moral intention. We take this intention quite seriously, or, rather, we are duly affected by a realized moral significance; the whole history has been conceived in a profoundly and essentially moral imagination. But the atmosphere precludes too direct a reference to our working standards of probability—that is, to our everyday sense of how things happen; so that there is an answer to Leslie Stephen when he comments on *Silas Marner* in its quality of moral fable:

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> 'The supposed event—the moral recovery of a nature reduced by injustice and isolation to the borders of sanity—strikes one perhaps as more pretty than probable. At least, if one had to dispose of a deserted child, the experiment of dropping it by the cottage of a solitary in the hope that he would bring it up to its advantage and to his own regeneration would hardly be tried by a judicious philanthropist'.

Leslie Stephen, of course, is really concerned to make a limiting judgment, that which is made in effect when he says:

> 'But in truth the whole story is conceived in a way which makes a pleasant conclusion natural and harmonious'.

There is nothing that strikes us as false about the story; its charm depends upon our being convinced of its moral truth. But in our description of the satisfaction got from it, 'charm' remains the significant word.

The force of the limiting implication may be brought out by a comparative reference to another masterpiece of fiction that it is natural to bring under the head of 'moral fable': Dickens's *Hard Times*. The heightened reality of that great book (which combines a perfection of 'art' in the Flaubertian sense with an un-Flaubertian moral strength and human richness) has in it nothing of the fairy-tale, and is such as to preclude pleasantness altogether; the satisfaction given depends on a moral significance that can have no relations with charm. But the comparison is of course unfair: *Hard Times* has a large and complex theme, involving its author's profoundest response to contemporary civilization, while *Silas Marner* is modestly conscious of its minor quality.

The unfairness may be compensated by taking up Leslie Stephen's suggestion that '*Silas Marner* is . . . scarcely equalled in English literature, unless by Mr. Hardy's rustics in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and other early works'. Actually, the comparison is to George Eliot's advantage (enormously so), and to Hardy's detriment, in ways already suggested. The praises that have been given to George Eliot for the talk at the Rainbow are deserved. It is indeed remarkable that a woman should have been able to present so convincingly an exclusively masculine milieu. It is the more remarkable when we recall the deplorable Bob Jakin of *The Mill on the Floss*, who is so obviously and embarrassingly a feminine product.

Silas Marner closes the first phase of George Eliot's creative life. She finds that, if she is to go on being a novelist, it must be one of a very different kind. And *Romola*, her first attempt to achieve the necessary inventiveness, might well have justified the conviction that her creative life was over.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[To be concluded].

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GOETHE'S 'FAUST' AND THE WRITTEN WORD

(II) A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS

> 'Most men are wont to treat a work of art, though fixed and done, as if it were a piece of soft clay. The hard and polished marble is again to mould itself, the firm-walled edifice is to contract or to expand itself, according as their inclinations, sentiments and whims may dictate; the picture is to be instructive, the play to make us better, everything is to do all'.
>
> —(*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*).

IN the previous number of *Scrutiny* I attempted to elucidate the plan, or the 'plot', on which *The First Part* of *Faust* is, it seems to me, so firmly based. 'What is Goethe trying to say?': that is a question which commentators have always boggled at, even in the days when the work enjoyed something of a vogue in England. And posed like this it certainly is rather misleading: there is no laborious, self-conscious striving for metaphysical profundity about the play, nor on the other hand is it at all 'out of focus' in its moral insight.

Then why is it so difficult for the English reader to bring *The First Part* into mental focus? I am afraid that the main reason lies in a far-reaching and surprisingly consistent series of what may aptly be called 'critical accidents' — almost fatal accidents—with which the play has met in England: a series of exegetical misconceptions revolving round the unhappy coincidence of several factors—the muddling together of the different drafts of *Faust*, an annoyed irritation at finding no 'clear-cut' attitude towards the hero (such as there is in Marlowe's play), an often maudlin pre-occupation with the Gretchen sub-plot, an inability to 'place' Mephistopheles (possibly a constitutional inability of the Victorian mind, but not, I think, of the English mind) . . . You will notice, between the lines of so much critical work on *Faust*, that all the time the writer is thinking—whatever he may say about it—'What a mess Goethe made of this fine old story, all this promising material . . .!'

The purpose of these rather disjointed notes is to supplement what was an inevitably sketchy survey of the play as a whole by examining, in more detail, some of the more outstanding of these misconceptions. For these fallacious notions about *Faust* must not be under-estimated: the sad thing is that they prevail even among people who might be expected to know better—so that those who have rejected the errors of Bradley, Dowden and similar

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Shakespearean critics are still content to accept opinions of ***Faust*** which derive from the scholarship of, say, J. G. Robertson, H. W. Nevinson, and the miserably inadequate English histories of German literature, and those who can see through Cary's ***Vision of Dante*** have failed to demand a translation of ***Faust*** to supersede those by A. G. Latham, Anna Swanwick, Bayard Taylor, still the 'classic' English versions.

* * * *

THE PLOT.

An Austrian acquaintance, for whom *Faust* has the kind of significance which *Hamlet* or *King Lear* have for us, recently expressed the opinion that the rather contemptuous estimate of the German play which prevails in this country was due to our grave dissatisfaction with Goethe's not-quite-frank attitude to Faust. The English, my friend suggested, always ask whether a thing is good or whether it is bad, and they refuse to admit of any third alternative; now which is it? they say, is Faust meant to be good or bad? But Goethe will not give them a straight answer, and so they turn to Marlowe for consolation.

I do not think we are quite as provincial as this indictment would imply (the adjective is one which Mr. Eliot has applied to Goethe); it is, chiefly, that so much of our knowledge of the play comes to us, at second hand, by way of scholars whose moral prejudices found little to admire in Faust and too much to admire in Gretchen. If we do our own reading I hardly think we shall be unduly upset to discover that the Lord is no gaunt glowering Calvinist:

> Es irrt der Mensch, so lang er strebt—
>
> As long as he strives man must make mistakes.

For the Lord's thesis is that evil *is* a mistake, and not an inevitable concomitant of human nature, and that the ability to realize when he has made a mistake is part and parcel of the human make-up. Mephisto, on the contrary, contends that the human race, one of the Lord's less successful ventures, does not know the meaning of the word 'evil' and can be led into it and out of it like a lot of silly acquiescent sheep. Men seem, to him, a pitiably hybrid species who are making a fine mess of what was once his unambiguous kingdom, Chaos or 'Mother Night'. Heaven and Chaos are the two principles Mephistopheles can understand—absolute Law and absolute Anarchy: Earth is neither one nor the other.

And so the question of whether Faust is a good man or a bad man is entirely irrelevant. We shall find no answer to it in the play, which is both less, and more, ambitious. The real issue at stake is whether Faust will retain, under whatever circumstances, the instinct to judge his behaviour according to innate moral standards. Goethe, refusing to load the scales too crudely in either direction, and avoiding all sensationalism, eventually proves the

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Lord to be right. Not one man stands in the dock: this is the trial of the human race itself. And perhaps, in a way, it is a pity that Goethe used the Faust legend to convey his ideas about human nature ; the traditional figure of the magician of Wittenberg symbolizes for us so overwhelmingly the idea of sinful *hubris* and consequent damnation, and Goethe has geared his own purpose so smoothly to the legend, that we find it hard to realize that this play is something *new*, something most *unlike* the folk-saga of Dr. Johannes Faustus who dabbled in black magic and sold his soul to the devil. Usually it is the prototype or the source that is forgotten—the revenge play—while the work of art is cherished—the *Hamlet*, but, for us, the reverse holds in this case, and we are conversant with the general outline of the Faustus legend while Goethe's Faust is banished to the outer darkness—an unsolved enigma.

Yet it must be admitted that the legend suits Goethe's purpose far better than anything one could imagine—all of it, from the magic wine in Auerbach's cellar to the 'poor but beautiful country girl' with whom (it is just hinted at in the later Chapbooks) Faust fell in love, came so readily to the poet's hand that we must admit the advantages to outweigh the one disadvantage—that is, the danger inherent in using a popular traditional figure as a symbol for something altogether more penetrating. Goethe, after all, was within his rights in expecting his work to be read as an independent entity.

A more 'modern' approach to *Faust*, conducted by more enlightened critics, has dispensed with this point of Faust's goodness or badness but has fallen into what is perhaps a worse error. Thus the *Sunday Times* reviewer recently said something to the effect that the final message of the play is 'action is good'. Poor Goethe. First people complain that they cannot understand the play because Faust is neither good and rewarded with a crown nor is he bad and rewarded with a halter, and then they discover that the play isn't in the least concerned with the finer points of morality, and all it says (in five hundred pages) is 'It's a bad thing to sit on your bottom, so get cracking!' Goethe certainly does tell us that action is good—but, just as clearly, he tells us that good action is better. Action is good because it is man's 'sphere', his natural element—action hand in hand with our finest faculty, the power to evaluate and judge our own actions because we are 'always conscious of the right way'.

No, we mustn't assume that, since the play has no orthodox system of crime and punishment, it is therefore a ripe specimen of pagan beauty or merely a clarion call of the 'Life is Real, Life is Earnest' variety. It was lack of comprehension of a like kind that provoked what must be Goethe's most bitter remark: 'I let Gretchen go to the scaffold, and Ottilie starve to death, and yet they say I am no Christian. What could be more Christian than that?' But that, of course, was the trouble: no Christian would have sent Gretchen to the scaffold—Faust, instead, would have

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found himself there (and then there'd have been no *Second Part* to give us a headache), while Gretchen would have been let off with tar and feathers. But do you think that this observation could ever have been made by a man who went in for (if I may adapt the phrase) muscular pantheism?—

> how could man live at all if he did not give absolution
> every night to himself and all his brothers?

THE CHARACTER OF MEPHISTOPHELES.

> The whole earth is our hospital
> Endowed by the ruined millionaire . . .

In a commentary on Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Mr. Raymond Preston puts forward the very likely suggestion that these lines in *East Coker* are to be taken as a reference to the Fallen Angel, and, however that may be, I cannot conceive of a more illuminating description of Goethe's Mephistopheles than the phrase, 'the ruined millionaire'. 'The whole earth is our hospital . .': the Lord, at the end of the *Prologue in Heaven*, refers to man's love of complete sloth—'Er liebt sich bald die unbedingte Ruh'—and he says that it is to counteract this that he has 'endowed' them with Mephistopheles, 'who tempts and excites and must, though devil, create'. We see that the Almighty is not lacking in ingenuity: Mephisto's unrelenting attempt to destroy everything he possibly can, with a view to the restoration of original Chaos, will force man into a course of positive action for the sake of self-preservation. Mephistopheles *was* a 'millionaire', a Prince of Darkness—and the key to his character is the fact that he never realizes how completely ruined he is. When he seems to be confessing his own impotence—

> Was sich dem Nichts entgegenstellt,
> Das Etwas, diese plumpe Welt,
> So viel als ich schon unternommen,
> Ich wusste nicht ihr beizukommen,
> Mit Wellen, Stürmen, Schütteln, Brand;
> Geruhig bleibt am Ende Meer und Land!
> Und dem verdammten Zeug, der Thier—und Menschenbrut,
> Dem ist nun gar nichts anzuhaben.
> Wie Viele hab' ich schon begraben!
> Und immer circulirt ein neues, frisches Blut.
> So geht es fort, man möchte rasend werden!

> (This that sets itself up against Nothingness, this Something, this clumsy World—in spite of all I've already undertaken—floods, storms, earthquakes, conflagrations—I don't know how to get at it. Land and Sea still stand as firm as ever! And this damned living substance, this animal and human spawn—there just isn't any way to harm it now. How many I've buried already! But fresh

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new blood is always circulating, and so it goes on—
enough to drive anyone mad!)

we can be sure this is only meant to lull Faust into a state of false security. If we find ourselves in sympathy with much of his 'noble' indignation at the Lord's somewhat aloof attitude and with his animus against man's perennial stupidity, we ought to bear in mind that Mephistopheles, survivor from a superseded order, is the eternal Opposition, and it is always easy for the opposition critic to point out the weak spots—because he does not have to mend them. There is nothing of the martyred Prometheus about the Mephistopheles of *The First Part*, no soft heart for suffering humanity; he is, throughout, the Enemy, all his energies are bent to the one end. And he is never more dangerous than when he offers worldly advice, or when he begins to talk 'reason'. . .

WITCHCRAFT AND REASON.

Right from the beginning Mephisto betrays a cleverly-veiled hatred for Reason—'der Schein des Himmelslichts', he calls it in the *Prologue in Heaven*, complaining to the Lord that man 'would have managed to live a little better if you had not allowed him a glimmer of divine light—he calls it Reason and uses it only to be beastlier than any beast . . .' He loathes it not so much because it is a prime factor in the survival of humanity as because it is a *sine qua non* of the 'moral process'. And Reason, for Goethe, was no irrationally deified principle, definitely not the Cult of the eighteenth century; it will, indeed, be less misleading if we drop the capital letter and spell it *reason*—the process of objective thought which paves the way for a moral judgment. Hence Mephisto's malignant and exulting aside, at the end of his second interview with Faust—'Just you despise reason and knowledge, man's supreme strength . . . then you'll be mine, without conditions'—for, if he can bring Faust to throw overboard the act of reasoned deliberate thought, then the ability to make moral judgments must inevitably follow suit and, Faust having been led away from the spirit's 'fountain-head', Mephisto will have won his wager with the Lord. Consequently, we can see, Mephisto's plan of campaign splits into two parts: (i) the preparatory work (the magic show-piece in the Beer Cellar, the apotheosis of irrationality in the Witch's Kitchen), primarily an attack on Faust's belief in, and capacity for, reasoned thought, and (ii) the proof of Faust's degradation in, among other things, an utterly beastly relationship with Gretchen, dull mechanical sensuality unleavened by any feeling of pity, regret or revulsion.

A little attention to this not particularly abstruse relation between reason and moral judgment will help the reader to see how the various episodes slip into position, 'each part living in and acting on the others' as in the Sign of the Macrocosm. And then we realize why there is no dark diabolism in the Witch's Kitchen or on the Blocksberg, no full-dress Black Mass or the like; 'Ich

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bin keiner von den Grossen', Mephisto tells Faust in discussing their future career together—'I am not one of the great ones'. The antics of the Witch and her familiars, the Apes, are deliberately trivial—nonsense in its simplest form. The reason for this is that a scholar like Faust will be more vulnerable to nonsense rhymes like the 'Witches' One-times-One'—

> Now understand this!
> Out of One make Ten,
> Then take away Two,
> Make even with Three,
> And then you are rich . . .

than to some more earnest worship of Evil. Nor is Mephisto 'out of character' in cracking apologetic little jokes to Faust about the Witch's incantations—'Sie muss als Arzt ein Hokuspokus machen/ Damit der Saft dir wohl gedeihen kann' (Being a doctor, she has to perform this hocus-pocus so that the potion can have its full effect on you . . .). For Mephisto—as when, in a passage reminiscent of *The Devil Is An Ass*, he requests the Witch not to call him Satan—does not by any means wish to emphasize the Evil Principle but, indeed, to belittle and finally dispel from Faust's mind all principles, of whatever kind. Obviously a preoccupation with evil will only serve to make Faust all the more conscious of the distinction between good and evil; it is a commonplace that great sinners make great saints, whereas (if I may labour the point) Mephisto intends to transform Faust into neither a great saint nor a great sinner—merely into an unattractive little animal, devoid of both sinfulness and saintliness.[1] The sting in the Witch's rhymes and in the later *Walpurgisnacht* (an attempt to distract Faust's attention from Gretchen just at the moment when she needs it) lies in their utter harmlessness, their complete *irrelevance*.

One other point in connection with Mephisto's animus against reason should be noticed: the clever, apparently reasonable way in which he attacks reason. And so, however refreshing we may find Mephisto's variations on the theme 'which of you by taking

[1]A description not altogether inapplicable to most of the 'witches' mentioned in Christina Hole's recent book, *Witchcraft in England*—depressingly alike, the majority seem to have been weak, unimpressive personalities, clearly uninspired by any elemental vision of a Devil-God, who came to accept their own powers less through conviction than because of the fearfulness of their neighbours and the confusing stupidities of whatever they experienced in the way of 'Sabbaths', working on a mind originally not very lucid. The somewhat arbitrary habit of sticking pins into images bears an obvious similarity (in England, at least) to the way children behave in situations which their undeveloped moral sense cannot handle, and Miss Hole's book suggests that lack of clear understanding was the prime qualification for witchcraft of this rustic kind.

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thought can add one cubit unto his stature', particularly after so much of Faust's sick romantic longings, we ought to be aware that the argument has shifted to a different and less acceptable plane when he winds up with

> Ich sag' es dir: ein Kerl, der speculirt,
> Ist wie ein Thier, auf dürrer Haide
> Von einem bösen Geist im Kreis herum geführt,
> Und rings herum liegt schöne grüne Weide.
>
> (I tell you, the fellow who speculates is like some animal led in a circle by an evil spirit, round and round on a barren heath, while on either side lie beautiful green meadows).

This is sophistry masquerading as reason in order to drive out reason.

THE CHARACTER OF GRETCHEN.

'Gretchen, the most exquisite of innocent, loving, and trustful working-girls, the most lovable and pathetic figure ever created by genius'—so enthused H. W. Nevinson. But I doubt whether Goethe himself was really so overcome with his own creation. Her rôle in the play is, I should say, essentially functional: the exemplar of simple faith. Faust seems to me to be, quite consistently, the main figure in the play, the hero even in Gretchen's greatest scene, the conclusion of *The First Part*. The three characters are not assembled in the Dungeon for the purpose of showing how superior a kind heart and a simple faith are to a Ph.D. We mustn't let Gretchen steal this scene, for its real meaning depends on its trio-form: Gretchen accepting, without bitterness, the judgment of God—Mephisto convinced that God's judgment is sadly out of place in this world of bewildered and self-tormented mortals—Faust still unable to make up his mind whether there can be any such thing as valid judgment, either in God or in man . . . Gretchen is essentially a secondary figure and it is perhaps unfortunate for the play as a whole that she should have come to symbolize all ill-done-by innocents. No doubt she is dear to the Lord, but Goethe's epigram, 'Wer nicht verzweifeln kann, der muss nicht leben'—'He who cannot despair, cannot be said to live'—perhaps indicates a certain predilection for Faust and his kind.

Incidentally, I doubt whether Goethe's attitude towards women was quite as gallant as one is apt to assume; the innocent Eckermann reports 'Today at dinner we talked about ladies, and Goethe expressed himself very beautifully. "Women", said he, "are silver dishes into which we put golden apples" . . . ' And I am not sure that the curious events of that very ambiguous novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* are entirely explained away by Lewes' note that 'on the subject of the sexes the whole tone of feeling was low' during Goethe's epoch. 'Alas! she was not lovely when

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she loved; the greatest misery that can befall a woman'—poor Aurelia, and bold Carlyle to translate the work!

A generation less trustful than the post-Carlyle may consider Gretchen an eminently seducible subject—not only innocent but just a little foolish.

THE CHARACTER OF FAUST.

I intend only to say a little about Faust as we meet him in the long soliloquy with which the play proper begins—*viz.* before the impact of Mephistopheles. The latter's remark about Faust, during the *Prologue in Heaven*, is juster than he knows: 'Er ist seiner Tollheit halb bewusst' ('he is half-aware of his own madness')—he is, also, half-aware of the remedy.

The soliloquy opens with a sustained lament over the sterility of academic studies; our sympathies, to a certain extent, lie with Faust in this matter, for obviously his life as a scholar has not encouraged the use of the human prerogative, the power of moral judgment:

> No doubt I am shrewder than most of the upstarts—
> Professors, doctors, lawyers and priests;
> Neither scruples nor doubts torment me,
> And I fear neither Hell nor the Devil—
> In return I've forfeited all the joy of living:
> I can't deceive myself I know any of the truth,
> I can't deceive myself that by my teaching
> I could improve, could convert, my fellow beings.
> I haven't even gained money, or land,
> Or honour and fame in the world.
> Why, a dog wouldn't stand this life for long!

Already he has partially rejected reason, or at least the kind of reason he is accustomed to in his study of 'Philosophy and Law and Medicine and even—sad to say—Theology . . . ':

> So I've given myself to magic, hoping
> The spirit's faculty, the spirit's tongue,
> Will clear up all these mysteries,
> And I no longer have to teach,
> With bitter sweat, the things I do not know—
> Then I'll discover what it is that,
> At the centre, holds the world together,
> Perceive the first cause, the seeds of life—
> No longer fumbling with empty words.

But this 'magic' is the pseudo-science of Nostradamus, the 'art' of the Spirit of Earth and the intricate cabbalistic symbol of the Macrocosm. The latter, for instance, with its soothing representation of unity in multiplicity, is simply a picturesque and sensational version of the conclusion which orthodox philosophy has struggled to reach:

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See how all things are woven into One,
Each part moved by and moving the next!
See how supernal forces rise and fall,
Each passing on to each the golden bucket!
In waves exhaling benediction
They pierce the heavens, pervade the earth,
Each rings harmoniously through the All!

There is a kind of logic, if a slightly heretical kind, in this; and it is all white magic indeed, for it turns aside Faust's questions, implicitly advising him to return to life and to live.

The enthusiasm aroused by the symbol of the Macrocosm is, however, only transitory,

What a spectacle! But alas only a spectacle!
Where can I grasp you, illimitable Nature?
Your breasts, where?—Springs of all life,
Where heaven and earth both cling,
And for which the parched heart longs—
You flow, you suckle: must I waste away, in vain?

whereas the sign of the Spirit of Earth, curiously enough, sets him on the right path:

How differently this sign affects me!
You, Spirit of Earth, are closer to me;
Already I feel my faculties awakening,
Already I'm tingling as with new wine.
I am ready to pit myself against the world,
To live through all earth's misery, all earth's joy,
To contend against the mortal storm,
Unflinching among the debris of my foundering ship.

But so theatrical an attitude—a combination of the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman—seems hardly to promise well for the future. Faust's remedy, or at least the preliminary step to spiritual health, is to *live*—but not *à la* 'das Heldenleben', the Life Heroic. We must admit that if Faust, at this juncture, seems to be on the right path, he is undoubtedly threatening to step off on the wrong foot. Life is not something you swallow in large elemental doses, of pain and of pleasure, before the gods slip you a final Mickey Finn—that is the academician's error.

The Spirit of Earth, in so flatly snubbing Faust, does him the greatest possible kindness:

What pitiable fear
Has overcome you, Superman! Where is that cry from the heart?
Where is the man who fashioned a world within himself,
Carried it, cherished it? Who, quivering with joy,
Puffed himself up, to rival us, the spirits?
Where are you, Faust, whose voice rang in my ears,

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> Who pressed towards me with all your might?
> Are *you* Faust, you who, now my breath plays on you,
> Tremble in the depths of your being,
> A terrified and writhing worm? . . .
>
> You are like the spirit you comprehend,
> Not me!

But Faust who, rather like Mephistopheles, can only understand extremes, is for the moment utterly crushed by this repudiation.

Yet, during the interlude with Wagner which follows, we see Faust's native common sense in action: his attack on the artifices of oratory is surprisingly energetic and pungent coming from one who is already half-way to the stars. His cynicism about the 'wisdom of the past', though, is the expression of a half-truth:

> Parchment!—is that the sacred spring that slakes the thirst for ever? No, you have not won new life until it gushes up from your very soul . . .
> To us, my friend, the past is a book sealed with seven seals.

We should be very careful about what we infer from this, and from Faust's later aphorism, relating to his father's instruments of mediæval science—

> Whatever we inherit from our fathers
> We have to earn afresh, before it's ours!
> What we never make use of is a tiresome load:
> Only what the moment fashions can serve the moment's need.

Goethe himself certainly believed in utilizing the wisdom and knowledge of the past; Eckermann preserved this saying of his:

> People are always talking about originality, but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. And, after all, what can we call our own except energy, strength and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favour.

As soon as Wagner leaves, Faust once more gives way to an exaggerated self-disgust and, in a superb Homeric metaphor, repeats his dissatisfaction with human life:

> Though once imagination, in its eager flight
> And full of hope, embraced infinity,
> It finds a short excursion quite enough
> As dream after dream founders in Time's whirlpool.
> Anxiety nests in the heart's core instantly
> And there it works insidious sorrows,

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Restlessly rocking itself, it destroys our pleasure, our peace;
Always hiding behind fresh masks,
It may appear as house and home, as wife and child,
As fire, water, poison, knife.
We tremble for all those things that never happen,
And what we'll never lose, that we must always mourn.

I'm not like the gods! Only too well I know it;
I'm like the worm that wriggles through the dust,
And lives on dust and, under some passing foot,
Is crushed to pulp and buried in the dust.

Looking around at the instruments that litter his study, he cries

I stood at the door: you should have been its keys—
However intricate your wards, you cannot shoot the bolt.

This actually is a striking double pun, unfortunately spoilt in translation: 'euer Bart ist kraus' means primarily 'your wards are intricate', and secondarily 'your beard is curly'—suggesting Greek profundity in an evocation of Plato's beard.

And then Faust once more adopts the self-consciously heroic pose, though this time it is *death*, not life, that he feels driven to experience, and the flames of Hell that he must pit himself against:

On effortless wings a chariot of fire
Soars down to me! I am ready, I feel
To penetrate the ether on new paths
And reach new spheres of purer being.
That noble life, that godlike exaltation! . . .
Now is the time to prove in action
That human dignity rivals the majesty of gods—
Now, without flinching, face the dark abyss
Where fancy damns itself to self-invented pains,
And fight your way towards that tunnel
Around whose narrow mouth the whole of Hades burns.

But in spite of all this the timely chiming Easter bells recall him, temporarily, to life; on grounds which he himself feels to be insubstantial:

Now memory, with these child-like feelings,
Restrains me from this last grim step.
Ring out, then, oh you sweet celestial songs!
Tears overflow: and Earth possesses me again!

This, as I said before, indicates that he is by no means reconciled to the idea of suicide and, furthermore, that his lost faith is not completely lost.

Perceiving that the soliloquy is not meant to be read as a simple outburst of straight-forward Romantic world-weariness from the pen of a doting author, we realize that the Lord and Mephistopheles have hit on an admirable test-case for the settling

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of their wager. Faust is not, of course, a realistic portrait of the species *man*: but he is a reasonably normal man seen under a magnifying glass, and the strength of his character is magnified as well as his weaknesses. A magnifying glass, not a distorting mirror. So in all his excesses and in all his abnormalities—abnormalities of degree rather than kind—he favours the Lord and Mephistopheles equally.

FAUST IN TRANSLATION.

Goethe has been peculiarly unfortunate in his English translators: it seems to have been a custom with them to adopt, quite arbitrarily, the outward mode of one or another English poet or period, in which to embody (or, indeed, embed) something of the approximate sense of the original. Thus A. G. Latham (the *Everyman* version) chose a pseudo-Shakespearianism, Thomas Webb picked on a faintly Shelleyan style, while Anne Swanwick preferred a more dignified, eighteenth century note. I won't labour the point with quotations other than this one brief illustration: a line in the *Prelude on the Stage*, 'Doch, merkt euch wohl, nicht ohne Narrheit hören' ('but be sure that folly doesn't go unheard') is translated by Latham as 'But mark me, let not folly fail i' the chorus' and by Anna Swanwick as 'But mark! let folly also mingle in the strain'. And, all along, Goethe's natural, idiomatic German is debased into some or other kind of awful synthetic poesy, Dogberry-and-Verges heartiness in one case, a maiden-auntish drabness in another . . . and so on. The chief trouble with these translations seems to lie in the fallacious notion that if you reproduce a rhyme then you reproduce the reason, so never mind all the tortuous and only too obvious antics required to obtain these rhymes. If Latham feels justified in perverting the original by bringing in the idea of 'haunting' in order to find a rhyme for 'dilettante', and then does no better than 'dilettante'—'haunt ye', obviously he cannot be really interested in what the play is about. And once the translator has yielded to what I suspect is a species of *amour propre*, he seems to become entirely unable to read the written word of Goethe for what it is worth.

What I have said in this note is all fairly commonplace, but these false translations do constitute one of the worst of the misconceptions with which I have been concerned. However cynical the English reader may be about the value of the average translation, it is only too possible that after he has glanced at one or two of the *Faust* specimens he may be led into abandoning Goethe on the grounds that no really great poetry could ever look quite so dreadful in translation. But it can.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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FLAUBERT (I)

'Tout ce que je demande, c'est à continuer de pouvoir admirer les maîtres avec cet enchantement intime pour lequel je donnerais tout, tout. Mais quant à en devenir un, jamais, j'en suis sûr. Il me manque énormément; l'innéité d'abord'.

(Flaubert in a letter to George Sand).

I.

'THERE are two Flauberts', Mr. Middleton Murry once wrote.[1] 'One was born on the 12th of December, 1821, in the surgeon's house at Rouen hospital; the other in enthusiastic minds in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. One was a broad, big-boned, lovable, rather simple-minded man, with the look and the laugh of a farmer, who spent his life in agonies over the intensive culture of half-a-dozen curiously assorted volumes; the other was an incorporeal giant, a symbol, a war-cry, a banner under which a youthful army marched and marches still to the rout of the bourgeois and the revolution of literature'.

Nearly twenty-five years have passed since these lines were written and Flaubert's work is still a battle-ground. Where Mr. Murry saw only two Flauberts, we can discern perhaps four or five. Flaubert is still bitterly attacked and as warmly defended, but the focus has shifted. In the 1920's Proust was discussing the poverty of his imagery and Rivière the thinness of his psychology: to-day it is his political convictions or lack of convictions which engage us. Mr. Edmund Wilson has discovered a Socialist Flaubert 'who had observed something of which Marx was not aware'.[2] On the other hand, M. Jean-Paul Sarte, the champion of *la littérature engagée*, produces a bourgeois Flaubert. 'I hold Flaubert and Goncourt responsible for the repressions which followed the Commune', he remarks in a recent article, 'because they wrote not a single line to prevent them'.[3]

While it is a healthy sign that Flaubert's work still provokes such lively discussion, the change of emphasis is unfortunate. For a narrow, sectarian approach, which is unable to appreciate Flaubert's integrity and his single-minded devotion to his art, is scarcely a contribution to the formation of a 'responsible literature'. It can only add to the existing confusion of critical values. Nor is it easy to see in what way a greater infusion of politics would

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[1] *Countries of the Mind*, I, Oxford, 1931, p. 158.

[2] *The Triple Thinkers*, London, 1938, pp. 114-5.

[3] 'The Case for Responsible Literature' in *Horizon*, Vol. XI, No. 63, p. 310. Compare Flaubert's own comment on the wreck of the Tuileries: 'This need never have happened if they had only understood *l'Education sentimentale*'.

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have improved Flaubert's novels. He was more keenly aware than many of his contemporaries of the menace of political corruption and vested interests. Whatever his short-comings, 'timidity' and 'irresponsibility' are hardly words that can be fairly applied to the author of the prophetic comment on M. Dambreuse and his circle in *l'Education sentimentale*:

> 'La plupart des hommes qui étaient là avaient servi, au moins, quatre gouvernements; et ils auraient vendu la France ou le genre humain, pour garantir leur fortune, s'épargner un malaise, un embarras, ou même par simple bassesse, adoration instinctive de la force'.

Later in the same book he describes the sacking of the Palais-Royal by the mob:

> 'La canaille s'affubla ironiquement de dentelles et de cachemires. Des crépines d'or s'enroulèrent aux manches des blouses, des chapeaux à plumes d'autruche ornaient la tête des forgerons, des rubans de la Légion d'honneur firent des ceintures aux prostituées . . . Puis la fureur s'assombrit. Une curiosité obscène fit fouiller tous les cabinets, tous les recoins, ouvrir tous les tiroirs. Des galériens enfoncèrent leurs bras dans la couche des princesses, et se roulaient dessus par consolation de ne pouvoir les violer'.

Flaubert was happily free from sentimental illusions about 'the common man', from that narrow party spirit which has persuaded itself that humble origins and a lack of instruction are necessarily qualifications for good government. He saw very clearly that big business was ruining France; but though he perceived the weaknesses of the ruling class, he was not unaware of the civilized standards for which the owners of 'hats with ostrich feathers', 'ribbons of the Legion of Honour' and those who had lain in 'la couche des princesses' had stood. He was not a political novelist in the modern sense; he looked beyond politics to the moral situation which produced them and, because he was a distinguished artist, he saw that politics, so far from being the whole of life, were only one element in the 'mess' which he set out to describe.

II.

Flaubert maintained that there had been three main stages in the evolution of humanity: *le paganisme, le Christianisme* and what he called *le muflisme*. In his well-meaning study of 'Flaubert's Politics', Mr. Edmund Wilson has argued that each of his works illustrates one or other of these stages, has tried to give it a unity which it does not seem to me to possess. Among Flaubert's 'half-a-dozen curiously assorted volumes', there are only three which 'count': *Madame Bovary, l'Education sentimentale* and the short story *Un coeur simple*. Mr. Murry has well described *Salammbô* as 'the painful polishing of a hollow surface'; and its main interest

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lies in the fact that it illustrates most of Flaubert's principal faults and demonstrates the artistic impossibility of the historical novel. *La tentation de Saint-Antoine* possesses the same faults and does not seem to me to deserve the compliment intended in the description of it as 'the French *Faust*'. Nor can I share the view of those who regard *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as a great comic novel. It seems to me to be a failure and a glance at *Madame Bovary* helps us to understand why it failed. The most successful 'characters' in that novel are not the principals, are not Emma and Charles, but the Abbé Bournisien and M. Homais. They are genuine creations and they are a success because there is complete identity between what is loosely called the 'character' and the symbol. Bournisien stands for the inadequacy of the rural clergy in Normandy as Homais stands for the limitations of that progressive thought which was one of the French Revolution's most dubious gifts to humanity. The exchanges between the two are among the best comic scenes that Flaubert ever wrote and are an admirable comment on the *bêtise* which provoked him all his life. They are effective because they are subordinated to the plan of the book as a whole and are never allowed to get out of hand. In *Bouvard et Pécuchet* Flaubert tried to make middle-class stupidity the subject of a whole book, to elevate characters whose role could only be incidental into principals. 'L'effort des siècles', observes M. François Mauriac sorrowfully, 'aboutit à ces profondes caricatures . . . il éliminait l'âme du composé humain, pour obtenir de la bêtise à l'état pur'.[4] From an artistic point of view the result was disastrous—a book without point or plan, a mere endless boring repetition of the author's personal dislikes with scarcely the ghost of a smile in its four hundred pages.[5]

This leads to a further conclusion. There are many grounds on which Flaubert can legitimately be criticized, but he remains a great writer. A great writer yes, but a great writer with whom there was something badly wrong. The trouble lay not in incidentals, but at the heart of his work. When he turns from his successful minor characters to his principals, his hand falters; there is a blur at the centre of these books.

III.

Madame Bovary was intended as a study of the Romantic outlook and it is in many respects a *roman à thèse*. Its basic theme is the Romantic longing for a happiness which the world of common experience can never satisfy, the disillusionment which springs from the clash between the inner dream and an empty, hostile universe. Emma was a product of the Romantic Movement and her

[4] *Trois grands hommes devant Dieu*, Paris, 1930, pp. 149, 153.

[5] For an interesting statement of the contrary point of view see M. Raymond Queneau's 'Introduction à *Bouvard et Pécuchet*' in *Fontaine* (Algiers) No. 31.

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imagination had been inflamed by its extravagances; but in spite of flaws in her presentation she remains, as Flaubert would have wished her to remain, a symbol of universal validity. For the Romantic malady has become a permanent part of our consciousness. Emma has her counterpart to-day among the millions who crowd hungrily to the cinema to escape from a drab existence by battening on the impossible loves and the luxury palaces of American films. It is not, to be sure, a very honourable counterpart, but this is not the fault of the novelist. *Madame Bovary* is a remarkable work because of the subtlety with which Flaubert explored his theme. All Emma's misfortunes are caused by her inability to adapt herself to the world of everyday life. Her hunt for a Romantic passion drives her to adultery which undermines her character, involves her in a life of subterfuge and deceit and in the dubious financial transactions which finally bring about her suicide.

Flaubert's relation to the Romantic Movement was a curious and an interesting one. Its impress is apparent on almost every page that he wrote; but though it explains some of his most serious weaknesses, it also enabled him to make some of his most important discoveries. The classic French novel was the product of a small homogeneous society which possessed a common language. The precision of the French language enabled the novelist to make a profound study of complex states of mind, but he worked in a field which was necessarily limited. He was confined in the main to the great primary emotions, to a settled round of feelings. The break-up of this society in the eighteenth century transformed the scene. Man became a problem to be explored and there were no longer any limits to the exploration, no longer any clear-cut outline. The style of the classic writers was not a suitable medium to express the fresh feelings which had been released by the revolution or to reflect the shift and play of feeling and the variations of mood which engaged the writer's attention. The Romantics had moments of insight, but their work reveals a progressive movement away from the psychological realism of the seventeenth century and a tendency for their characters to disintegrate into a flood of unrelated words and images. Flaubert's task was to create a style which was capable of exact analysis and which would at the same time make use of the colour and suggestiveness of the French language discovered through the Romantic Movement.

There is a striking passage in Pt. I, Ch. 7, which throws some light on Flaubert's originality:

> 'Elle songeait quelquefois que c'étaient là pourtant les plus beaux jours de sa vie, la lune de miel, comme on disait. Pour en goûter la douceur, il eût fallu, sans doute, s'en aller vers ces pays à noms sonores où les lendemains de mariage ont de plus suaves paresses! Dans des chaises de poste, sous des stores de

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soie bleue, on monte au pas des routes escarpées, écoutant la chanson du postillon qui se répète dans la montagne avec les clochettes des chèvres et le bruit sourd de la cascade. Quand le soleil se couche, on respire au bord des golfes le parfum des citronniers; puis, le soir, sur la terrasse des villas, seuls et les doigts confondus, on regarde les étoiles en faisant des projets. Il lui semblait que certains lieux sur la terre devaient produire du bonheur, comme une plante particulière au sol et qui pousse mal toute autre part. Que ne pouvait-elle s'accouder sur le balcon des chalets suisses ou enfermer sa tristesse dans un cottage écossais, avec un mari vêtu d'un habit de velours noir à longues basques, et qui porte des bottes molles, un chapeau pointu et des manchettes!'

At a first reading one might pardonably suppose that this is no more than an unusually well-written description of a Romantic day-dream, but in reality it is far more than that. It is not only one of the central passages in *Madame Bovary*, it is also a landmark in the development of the European novel. The feelings are not in the nature of the undertaking very profound or very original, but in analysing the content of the Romantic *rêverie* Flaubert comes closer, perhaps, than any of his predecessors to the intimate workings of consciousness and his method clearly points the way to the inner monologue.

The passage, so far from being a straightforward description, is a deliberate piece of stylisation, which anticipates the method that was later used with conspicuous success by the Symbolists. For Flaubert translates feelings into *visual* images, enabling him to control expression by building each image into the final picture—in this case an imaginary voyage—and to register the transitions from one set of feelings to another with greater fidelity than had been possible before. The result seems to me to be a complete success and the passage an artistic whole. It is not strictly speaking a description at all, but the dramatic presentation of a 'mental event'. There is complete identity between image and feeling. Every image is a particle of Emma's sensibility and a strand in the final pattern. The 'lune de miel' is the symbol of a vague feeling of happiness associated with Emma's childhood, but its function is complex. It is the first of a series of images—landscapes, sounds, perfumes—which lead naturally from one to the other and it also marks the point at which Emma's contact with the actual world ends and the *rêverie* begins. Her feeling of happiness is the material out of which she constructs an adventure in an imaginary world which has the sharpness and heightened reality of an hallucination. The *noms sonores*, the *douceur* and the *suaves paresses* build up a general impression of softness and languor, a lazy voluptuous happiness. As they echo and answer one another, so too do the sounds—the song which echoes in the mountains is answered by the tinkle of the goats' bells, mingles with the muffled sound of the cascade and finally dies away in the silence of a summer night.

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When we come to 'Il lui semblait que certains lieux . . . ' we notice a change in the tone of the passage. The note of exaltation symbolized by 'lune de miel', with which it opens, changes to a wistfulness as she contemplates a *bonheur* which already belongs to the past, and this is followed by a sudden sinking as the *bonheur* is transformed into *tristesse*. The image which dominates the first part of the passage and gives the whole its particular flavour is that of the blue silk blinds with their smooth vivid tactile suggestions. Flaubert had a particular fondness for blue and we may suspect that here it was unconsciously suggested by statues of the Madonna which he had seen in churches. The blinds are drawn and are supposed to conceal strange depths of passion at play within the coach. So we have the impression of a blue mist radiating over the whole scene and enveloping it. The most striking thing about the passage, however, is the absence of the romantic lover. The drawn blinds do not conceal an exotic passion, but an empty coach or a coach in which there is only a lonely woman. We catch a glimpse of 'les doigts confondus', but they are anonymous fingers—fingers without hands. There is, too, the 'mari vêtu d'un habit de velours noir', and we see the black velvet jacket with its long tails very clearly. We also see the 'chapeau pointu', but we never see the features of the man inside because there is no one there, only a tailor's dummy rigged out in extravagant garments.

The passage leaves us with a sense of absence and this is the crux of the book. The account of the *physical* absence of the lover here is completed by the account of his *psychological* absence in another place:

> 'Elle se promettait continuellement, pour son prochain voyage, une félicité profonde, puis elle s'avouait ne rien sentir d'extraordinaire. Cette déception s'effaçait vite sous un espoir nouveau, et Emma revenait à lui plus enflammée, plus avide. Elle se déshabillait brutalement, arrachant le lacet mince de son corset, qui sifflait autour de ses hanches comme une couleuvre qui glisse. Elle allait sur la pointe de ses pieds nus regarder encore une fois si la porte était fermée, puis elle faisait d'un seul geste tomber ensemble tous ses vêtements,—et pâle, sans parler, sérieuse, elle s'abattait contre sa poitrine, avec un long frisson'.

The first sentence describes with great insight the central experience of Flaubert's work. The sensation of 'falling out of love' is not, perhaps, an unusual one, but Flaubert invests it with immense significance. He is the great master of negation. Some of the most impressive pages in his books describe the sudden collapse of all feeling, the void which suddenly opens at the supreme moments of life and the realization that not simply one's emotional life, but one's whole world has fallen into ruin. There is no crash, no disaster—it is this that makes it so horrifying—life simply comes to an end. When you look into it, you find that there is nothing there.

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What I have called physical and psychological absence is combined in the 'long frisson'. Emma's tragedy is twofold. It lies in her inability to adapt herself to the normal world and in her failure to construct a durable inner life which would compensate for its drabness. The 'long frisson' reflects the tendency of the human mind to escape from the disenchantment of awakening and from the pressure of thought by deliberately submerging itself in primitive animal contacts, as Emma does here. It is a mental blackout, a voluptuous swoon in which the intelligence is completely suspended. The placing of the closing words and the punctuation—'et pâle, sans parler, sérieuse, elle s'abattait . . . '—convey the sensation of someone losing consciousness, falling into nothingness. The words are interesting for another reason. They mark the limit of Flaubert's power of analysis. His preoccupation with negative states almost certainly reflects his own inability to penetrate deeply into the content of experience. This makes the contrast between 'elle s'avouait ne rien sentir d'extraordinaire' and 'elle se déshabillait brutalement' of particular interest. For here the novelist intervenes in the life of his creature. It is his own starved sensibility, his own incapacity for deep feeling that he portrays in Emma. The violent actions which follow are an attempt to whip up the feelings that he is convinced that he ought to experience, to obtain a vicarious satisfaction of feelings which life had refused him.[6]

'Je me suis toujours défendu de rien mettre de moi dans mes oeuvres,' said Flaubert in a letter to Louise Colet, 'et pourtant j'en ai mis beaucoup'.[7] Although these words were written ten years before the publication of *Madame Bovary*, they show that Flaubert was already conscious of the divided purpose which disturbs the artistic unity of the book. *Madame Bovary* purports to be a study of *l'amour-maladie*, but it is only partly that and partly a study of the novelist's personal attitude which could not always be expressed through the symbols that he chose and was sometimes in flagrant conflict with them.

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[6]There are a number of letters written during Flaubert's twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years that provide an interesting commentary on his emotional development which helps us to understand to what extent the weaknesses of the novels are the result of his personal psychology. As a comment on his curious lack of feeling, we find him writing of the death of his sister to Maxime du Camp in a letter of 20th March, 1846:

> 'C'est étrange. Autant je me sens expansif et débordant dans les douleurs fictives, autant les vraies restent dans mon coeur âcres et dures; elles s'y cristallisent à mesure qu'elles y viennent.' *Oeuvres complètes*: *Correspondance* (1ère série), Paris, 1926, p. 195.

[7]*ibid.*, p. 254. (Compare: 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi').

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'En somme', wrote M. André Maurois in a study of the French novel, 'En somme, Mme. de La Fayette avait étudié l'amour en métaphysicien, Rousseau en moraliste, Stendhal en amoureux, Flaubert en mécréant et en iconoclaste'.[8] This comment draws attention to interesting possibilities, though whether M. Maurois is aware of them is another matter. There was nothing new in Flaubert's preoccupation with sexual passion, but his approach differs sensibly from that of his predecessors. The great dramatists and novelists of the past had concentrated on it because it is the profoundest of human instincts and enabled them to make some of the most searching studies of human nature that we possess. In Flaubert it had the reverse effect, narrowing instead of widening the scope of his work. He was aware of its importance, but he was only interested in its destructive effect on human personality and he selected it because it was the most vulnerable point for his carefully planned attack on human nature. For when we look into the structure of *Madame Bovary*, we find that so far from being a detached study of sexual mania and in spite of a superficial moral orthodoxy, it is an onslaught on the whole basis of human feeling and on all spiritual and moral values.

The first fifty pages, where he keeps his personal preoccupations severely under control, are amongst the best that Flaubert ever wrote. The narrative moves swiftly and economically forwards. There is no padding and none of the disastrous descriptions of external reality which contribute so much to the ruin of *l'Éducation sentimentale*. The book opens with a scene of delightful comedy—the arrival of the absurd Charles Bovary as a new boy at his school. In these opening chapters the main characters are introduced and their significance sketched. The stolid, good-natured, unimaginative Charles stands for the ordinary man, the humdrum everyday reality, and the first phase closes with his disastrous alliance with the unbalanced, over-imaginative Emma.

The first rift occurs shortly after their marriage. The Bovarys are invited to stay with the Comte de Vaubyessard for the family ball. Emma finds herself for a moment in an aristocratic world, a world of luxury and romance which suddenly seems to offer everything for which she had unconsciously been longing:

> 'Leurs habits, mieux faits, semblaient d'un drap plus souple, et leurs cheveux ramenés en boucles vers les tempes, lustrés par des pommades plus fines. Ils avaient le teint de la richesse, ce teint blanc que rehaussent la pâleur des porcelaines, les moires du satin, le vernis des beaux meubles, et qu'entretient dans sa santé un régime discret de nourritures exquises. Leur cou tournait à l'aise sur des cravates basses; leurs favoris longs tombaient sur des cols rabattus; ils s'essuyaient les lèvres à des mouchoirs brodés d'un large chiffre, d'où sortait une odeur suave. Ceux qui commençaient à vieillir avaient l'air jeune, tandis que

[8] *Cinq visages de l'amour*, New York, 1943, p. 167.

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quelque chose de mûr s'étendait sur le visage des jeunes. Dans leurs regards indifférents flottait la quiétude des passions journellement assouvies; et, à travers leurs manières douces, perçait cette brutalité particulière que communique la domination de choses à demi faciles, dans lesquelles la force s'exerce et où la vanité s'amuse, le maniement des chevaux de race et la société des femmes perdues'.

I think we must admit that Flaubert achieves something here which his predecessors had not attempted, something of which classical French prose for all its merits was perhaps incapable. In a few lines, with a few deft touches, he *evokes* the life of a highly civilized society; the description of the cut of a coat, the turn of a head is sufficient to reveal the essential gifts of the ruling class which had made France great. The final sentence, with its restrained irony, indicates both the strength and the weakness of this society. It would be difficult to improve on his description of its patrician dignity and pride: 'Dans leurs regards indifférents flottait la quiétude des passions journellement assouvies; et, à travers leurs manières douces, perçait cette brutalité particulière . . . ' Nor would it be easy to improve upon the way in which Flaubert hints at the weaknesses which had led to the ruin of the French nobility when he speaks of 'la domination de choses à demi faciles . . . le maniement des chevaux de race et la société des femmes perdues'. This use of language—this combination of evocation and critical appraisal—is one of Flaubert's most effective and important innovations.

The damage done by Emma's experience to the Bovary's married life is irreparable:

'Son voyage à la Vaubyessard avait fait un trou dans sa vie, à la manière de ces grandes crevasses qu'un orage, en une seule nuit, creuse quelquefois dans les montagnes'.

It is a characteristic sentence. The fact of the rift is stated with Flaubert's customary forthrightness in the first clause; the commonplace image which follows shows how he tried to force his sensibility, giving us a feeling of a vain and unrewarding hunt for the *mot juste* which always eludes him.

The third phase opens with the Bovarys' removal to Yonville-l'Abbaye and Emma's first encounter with Léon. The confused and excited feelings released by her visit to la Vaubyessard seek an outlet. She hovers on the verge of adultery and is only saved by Léon's departure for Paris. In her perplexity her mind turns to religion and Flaubert takes the opportunity of making a critique of religion:

'Un soir que la fenêtre était ouverte, et que, assise au bord, elle venait de regarder Lestiboudois, le bedeau, qui taillait le buis, elle entendit tout à coup sonner l'*Angelus*.

'On était au commencement d'avril, quand les primevères sont écloses; un vent tiède se roule sur les plates-bandes labourées,

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et les jardins, comme des femmes, semblent faire leur toilette pour les fêtes de l'été . . . La vapeur du soir passait entres les peupliers sans feuilles, estompant leurs contours d'une teinte violette, plus pâle et plus transparente qu'une gaze subtile arrêtée sur leurs branchages. Au loin, des bestiaux marchaient, on n'entendait ni leurs pas, ni leurs mugissements, et la cloche, sonnant toujours, continuait dans les airs sa lamentation pacifique.

'A ce tintement répété, la pensée de la jeune femme s'égarait dans ses vieux souvenirs de jeunesse et de pension. Elle se rappela les grands chandeliers, qui dépassaient sur l'autel les vases pleins de fleurs et le tabernacle à colonnettes. Elle aurait voulu, comme autrefois, être encore confondue dans la longue ligne des voiles blancs, que marquaient de noir ça et là les capuchons raides des bonnes soeurs inclinées sur leur prie-Dieu; le dimanche à la messe, quand elle relevait sa tête, elle apercevait le doux visage de la Vierge, parmi les tourbillons bleuâtres de l'encens qui montait. Alors un attendrissement la saisit; elle se sentit molle et tout abandonnée . . . ce fut sans en avoir conscience qu'elle s'achemina vers l'église, disposée à n'importe quelle dévotion, pourvu qu'elle y absorbât son âme et que l'existence entière y disparût'.

It is an admirable example of Flaubert's art at its finest. The insistent ringing of the church bell through a process of of sensuous suggestion sets the mechanism of memory in motion. The dying away of the sounds from the external world marks the beginning of the *rêverie* so that the final stroke of the bell merges into the remembered sound of the bell at the convent. Emma's childhood is evoked with extraordinary vividness. The images dovetail perfectly into one another. 'Les jardins, comme des femmes, semblent faire leur toilette pour les fêtes de l'été' suggests the flowers on the altar and the veils of the schoolgirls; the 'vapeur du soir . . . d'une teinte violette' floats into the 'tourbillons bleuâtres de l'encens'. There is no direct comment, but Flaubert by employing the same method that he used in the account of the ball at la Vaubyessard shows us that Emma's religion is of the same quality as her dreams of romantic love. It is largely emotional, a desire to return to her childhood and be one of a row of little girls in white veils or to plunge into 'n'importe quelle dévotion' provided that it brings oblivion, 'que l'existence entière y disparût'.

On her way to the church she meets the Abbé Bournisien to whom she turns for help, but he completely fails to understand her. The intention of this memorable scene, which is too long to quote, is to show the inability of the Church to provide a solution. This double criticism disposes of religion and Emma is now ripe for a fall.

The fourth phase is the liaison with Rodolphe. The outstanding scene, which from a technical point of view has had an immense influence, is the visit of Emma and Rodolphe to the Comices Agricoles. The *conseiller de préfecture's* speech alternates with the

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conversation between the two lovers; the platitudes about religion, duty, progress and patriotism and Rodolphe's platitudes about enduring passion and the new morality answer one another mockingly, cancel one another out, leaving the reader with the impression that love and duty are mere shams, that nothing has value. The effect is intensified when the speech is followed by the distribution of prizes to deserving farmers:

'Et il saisit sa main; elle ne la retira pas.

"Ensemble de bonnes cultures!" cria le président.
— Tantot, par exemple, quand je suis venu chez vous . . .
"A. M. Bizet, de Quincampoix".
— Savais-je que je vous accompagnerais?
"Soixante et dix francs!"
— Cent fois même j'ai voulu partir, et je vous ai suivie, je suis resté.
"Fumiers".
— Comme je resterais ce soir, demain, les autres jours, toute ma vie!
"A M. Caron, d'Argueil, une médaille d'or!"
— Car jamais je n'ai trouvé dans la société de personne un charme aussi complet.
"A M. Bain, de Givry-Saint-Martin!"
— Aussi, moi, j'emporterai votre souvenir.
"Pour un bélier de mérinos . . . "
— Mais vous m'oublierez, j'aurai passé comme une ombre.
"A M. Belot, de Notre-Dame . . . "
— Oh! non, n'est-ce pas, je serai quelque chose dans votre pensée, dans votre vie?
"Race porcine, prix *ex aequo*: à MM. Lehérissé et Cullembourg; soixante francs!" '

The opening announcement is an ironic comment on Emma and Rodolphe, standing furtively hand in hand. For we know that at bottom they are anything but 'bonnes cultures'. When Rodolphe cries: ' Savais-je que je vous accompagnerais?' the mocking voice, which chimes in with 'Soixante et dix francs', becomes the voice of the courtesan announcing the price of her favours or of the hard-boiled man of the world making an offer for those favours. When Rodolphe whispers that he stayed because he could not tear himself away, the strident voice answers jeeringly: 'Fumiers'. The promise to remain 'this evening, tomorrow, the other days, all my life' is greeted derisively by: 'Une médaille d'or!' 'J'emporterai votre souvenir' is answered by 'Un bélier de mérinos'. In the final announcement the irony grows savage. 'I shall count for something in your thoughts, in your life, shan't I?' asks Emma timidly. The voice retorts, brutally: 'Race porcine *ex aequo*— Pigs, the pair of you'.[9]

I think that it will be agreed that this scene is a decidedly impressive performance, a ironical commentary not merely on

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Emma's assumed modesty and Rodolphe's vows of eternal fidelity, but on the whole basis of love. It ends by transforming the pair into a couple of pigs rolling over each other on the dung-heap. For the words which give it its particular tone are *Fumiers* and *Race porcine*. They sum up Rodolphe's views on love and there seems little doubt that Flaubert himself shared them or that he used this slick, shallow adventurer as part of his general plan for bringing it into discredit. Later in the book, we read of him:

> 'Ce qu'il ne comprenait pas, c'était tout ce trouble dans une chose aussi simple que l'amour'.
>
> 'Il jugea toute pudeur incommode. Il la traita sans façon. Il en fit quelque chose de souple et de corrompu'.

When he comes to write his *lettre de rupture*, Emma already means so little to him that he has to turn up some of her old letters to him to provide inspiration. He comes across a mass of letters from different women.

> 'En effet, ces femmes, accourant à la fois dans sa pensée, s'y gênaient les unes les autres et s'y rapetissaient, comme sous un même niveau d'amour qui les égalisait . . .
>
> "Quel tas de blagues! . . . "
>
> Ce qui résumait son opinion; car les plaisirs, comme des écoliers dans la cour d'un collège, avaient tellement piétiné sur son coeur, que rien de vert n'y poussait, et ce qui passait par là, plus étourdi que les enfants, n'y laissait pas même, comme eux, son nom gravé sur la muraille'.

The final phase of the novel begins with the return of Léon whose mistress Emma becomes. In a comment on the liaison with Rodolphe the nevelist remarks:

> 'Alors elle se rappela les héroïnes des livres qu'elle avait lus, et la légion lyrique de ces femmes adultères se mit à chanter dans sa mémoire avec des voix de soeurs qui la charmaient'.

We are told of the affair with Léon:

> 'Emma retrouvait dans l'adultère toutes les platitudes du mariage'.

It is characteristic of the book—the sudden expansion signified by *lyrique* collapses inevitably from within into *platitude*; *mariage*

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[9]The account of the Comices Agricoles is more than an attack on sexual passion. The ceremony, which closes with the presentation of a silver medal and twenty-five francs to Catherine-Nicaise-Elizabeth Leroux for fifty-four years service on the same farm, is also an attack on the whole life of the French agricultural community. For Flaubert shows no appreciation of agricultural life. It is reduced to the same boring monotony as everything else.

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and *adultère* cancel out. Marriage or adultery, it is always the same story of frustration and disappointment.

There is a passage which sums up not only Emma's experience, but the author's intention:

> 'Les premiers mois de son mariage, ses promenades à cheval dans la forêt, le vicomte qui valsait, et Lagardy chantant, tout repassa devant ses yeux . . . Et Léon lui parut soudain dans le même éloignement que les autres.
>
> "Je l'aime pourtant!" se disait-elle.
>
> N'importe! elle n'était pas heureuse, ne l'avait jamais été.
>
> D'où venait donc cette insuffisance de la vie, cette pourriture instantanée des choses où elle s'appuyait?'

Fumiers, Race porcine, pourriture and *corruption* reflect the novelist's own personal outlook, a mood which envelops everything, undermining, dissolving feeling into nothingness. We read, for example, of Charles after Emma's death:

> 'Il mettait du cosmétique à ses moustaches, il souscrivit comme elle des billets à ordre. Elle le *corrompait* par delà le tombeau'.

The last fifty pages possess the same qualities as the first fifty. They are the traditional excellences of the finest European novels. For in the closing pages the novelist manages to forget himself and to keep his eye on his heroine. The morbid satisfaction with which he has recorded her misfortunes gives way to a pity which does him more credit and adds another dimension to the book. The figure of Emma stands out with startling clarity and her death is really moving. The scene in which she returns to Rodolphe to try to borrow money from him in order to avoid being sold up by her creditors is one of the finest in the book:

> ' "Mais, lorsqu'on est si pauvre, on ne met pas d'argent à la crosse de son fusil! On n'achète pas une pendule avec des incrustations d'écailles!" continuait-elle en montrant l'horloge de Boulle; "ni des sifflets de vermeil pour ses fouets—elle les touchait!—ni des breloques pour sa montre! . . . Eh! quand ce ne serait que cela", s'écria-t-elle en prenant sur la cheminée ses boutons de manchettes, "que la moindre de ces niaiseries! on en peut faire de l'argent! . . . Oh! je n'en veux pas! garde-les".
>
> Et elle lança bien loin les deux boutons, dont la chaîne d'or se rompit en cognant contre la muraille.
>
> "Mais, moi, je t'aurais tout donné, j'aurais tout vendu, j'aurais travaillé de mes mains, j'aurais mendié sur les routes, pour un sourire, pour un regard, pour t'entendre dire: 'Merci' " '.

This is a different Emma from the unbalanced romantic who is studied throughout the greater part of the book. Her voice, freed from the confusing undertones of her creator, has a different

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accent. There is no blur here. The simple, direct words contrast strangely with her muddled dreams. They come straight from the heart and appeal to something far deeper in us.

We cannot help noticing that Flaubert displayed a marked reluctance to give due weight to what was valid and genuine in Emma. She was not, as Henry James alleged, a woman who was 'naturally depraved'. She possessed a number of solid virtues which were deliberately played down by the novelist. It was after all to her credit that she possessed too much sensibility to fit comfortably into the appalling provincial society of Yonville l'Abbaye and it was her misfortune that she was not big enough to find a way out of the dilemma. We cannot withhold our approval from her attempts to improve her mind or from the pride that she took in her personal appearance and in the running of her house. The truth is that Flaubert sacrificed far too much to his *thèse*. These virtues express his instinctive appreciation of what was sane and well-balanced in the French middle classes. In sacrificing them to a doctrinaire pessimism which was held intellectually instead of arising from his contemplation of his material, he destroyed the findings of his own sensibility and involved himself in a confusion of values. We may conclude, too, that it was this nihilism, this sense that nothing—neither religion, morals nor love—has value rather than a few lurid scenes which really upset French *mères de famille* in the year 1857 and led to Flaubert's prosecution for immorality.

The critic is faced with another problem. While *Madame Bovary* is admittedly only partly successful on account of conflicting attitudes, it still has to be decided what value should be attached to Flaubert's pessimism, whether it is a mature conception of life or an immature cynicism which is masquerading as mature vision.

IV.

French critics used to be fond of debating the comparative merits of *Madame Bovary* and *l'Education sentimentale*. The later book is undoubtedly far more ambitious. The eminent novelist turns his back on the loves of a country doctor's wife and attempts a full-length study of high society as seen through the eyes of a rich young man. It can hardly be maintained that the result is a success or that as a work of art it is comparable to *Madame Bovary*. For the larger canvas does not suit Flaubert. Instead of providing him with greater scope, it throws into relief the limitations of his sensibility which is reduced to a pathetic trickle winding through the endless wastes of words. Love, politics, art—all wither beneath his touch and are submerged in a common futility. Pellerin, the bad painter, is a successful minor character, but as social criticism the book is a failure. 'Oh, how tired I am', he wrote in a tell-tale sentence of a letter to George Sand, 'of the ignoble worker, the inept bourgeois, the stupid peasant and the odious ecclesiastic'. The truth is that, in spite of his honesty,

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Flaubert did not possess either the penetration or the temper which go to the making of the great social critic. His irony is almost always too heavy, too obvious. There is an undercurrent of *rancoeur*, an exasperation with stupidity which is continually breaking out in crude denunciation.

We must not be misled by Flaubert's sub-titles. Whether he calls a book 'Moeurs de Province' or 'l'Histoire d'un Jeune Homme', his basic interests are the same, and the resemblances between the two books are in general more striking than their differences. Frédéric's love story does, however, introduce some interesting variations and since the claim is implicit in the book, *l'Education sentimentale* must be considered as a social document as well as a study of personal relationships.

In *l'Education sentimentale* Flaubert drew directly on his personal experience. Frédéric Moreau is a portrait of the artist and his devotion to Mme. Arnoux is founded on Flaubert's own devotion to Elisa Schlésinger.[10] We may suspect that Flaubert adopted this course partly to avoid the conflict which we find in *Madame Bovary* and partly to give his personal experience a wider context and a more representative significance. It could be argued that in *Madame Bovary* he was exposing what is in essence an immature state of mind, but no such excuse can be made for the failure of *l'Education sentimentale*. The book, indeed, belies its title. For there is no education, no development. Frédéric is eighteen at the beginning of the book and forty-five at the end of it; but except that he is worn out by his frivolous life, the Frédéric whom we take leave of after nearly six hundred pages is fundamentally the same as the Frédéric whom we meet on page one. 'Qu'il y a longtemps déjà', said Flaubert in a letter to Alfred Le Poittevin, 'que mon coeur a ses volets fermés, ses marches désertes, hôtelleries tumultueuses autrefois, mais maintenant vide et sonore comme un grand sépulcre sans cadavre'.[11] There is no doubt that he was more at home with the 'literary' emotions of *Madame Bovary* and his attempt to write a novel about his own experiences explains the psychological barrenness of *l'Education sentimentale*.

The one positive force in Frédéric's life appears to be his love of Mme. Arnoux, but on closer inspection it turns out to have a different significance:

> 'Et ils s'imaginaient une vie exclusivement amoureuse, assez féconde pour remplir les plus vastes solitudes, excédant toutes

[10]Frédéric's affair with Mme. Dambreuse was based on Maxime Du Camp's liaison with Mme. Delessert. Flaubert deliberately shows Frédéric's conduct in this part of the book in a discreditable light in order to revenge himself on Du Camp with whom he had quarrelled. (See R. Dumesnil, *Flaubert, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, Paris, 1932, pp. 361-384).

[11]*Op. cit.* p. 166.

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les joies, défiant toutes les misères, où les heures auraient disparu dans un continuel épanchement d'eux-mêmes, et qui aurait fait quelque chose de resplendissant et d'élevé comme la palpitation des étoiles'.

We recognize this as the familiar language of the romantic lover, the familiar hunt for an impossible love 'excédant toutes les joies' and producing 'un continuel épanchement d'eux-mêmes'. The creation of Mme. Arnoux was an attempt to give shape and form to the princely lovers of whom Emma dreamed, but in this book the critical attitude which informed *Madame Bovary* is largely absent. Flaubert takes romantic love seriously. The love affair is never consummated not because of moral scruples or because she would not 'yield', but because romantic love must of its nature be unhappy and its object inaccessible. Mme. Arnoux marks the stage at which the emotional development of Frédéric and, it must be added, of his creator was arrested. His high-minded devotion is an adolescent admiration which not only fails to develop into anything better, but also prevents him from growing up emotionally. At bottom it is, perhaps, a defence mechanism, a prolonged adolescence which provides a refuge from the responsibilities of adult life.

Frédéric's desire for 'une vie exclusivement amoureuse' recalls forcibly Flaubert's revealing admission: 'Madame Bovary, c'est moi'. The resemblance does not end there. The *déception* which Frédéric experiences when he meets Mme. Arnoux again after his absence in the country is strikingly like Emma's in the presence of Léon:

> 'Frédéric s'était attendu à des spasmes de joie;—mais les passions s'étiolent quand on les dépayse, et, ne retrouvant plus Mme. Arnoux dans le milieu où il l'avait connue, elle lui semblait avoir perdu quelque chose, porter confusément comme une dégradation, enfin n'être pas la même. Le calme de son coeur le stupéfiait'.

Frédéric's 'spasmes de joie' resemble Emma's 'félicité profonde', and 'le calme de son coeur' expresses an emptiness which differs little from Emma's 'long frisson'.

Flaubert tried to make Frédéric's love story more interesting by providing him with a greater choice of mistresses: the chaste and ethereal qualities of Mme. Arnoux, the crude vitality and gaiety of Rosanette, the refinements of Mme. Dambreuse and the fresh, simple charm of Louise. Rosanette is, however, the only one of the four whose vitality is genuine, who really comes to life. What is interesting is the relation of the different women in Frédéric's mind and the way in which the different sides of his character are revealed through them:

> 'La fréquentation de ces deux femmes faisait dans sa vie comme deux musiques: l'une folâtre, emportée, divertissante, l'autre grave et presque religieuse; et, vibrant à la fois, elles

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augmentaient toujours, et peu à peu se mêlaient;—car, si Mme. Arnoux venait à l'effleurer du doigt seulement, l'image de l'autre, tout de suite, se présentait à son désir, parce qu'il avait, de ce côté-là, une chance moins lointaine;—et, dans la compagnie de Rosanette, quand il lui arrivait d'avoir le coeur ému, il se rappelait immédiatement son grand amour'.

We read of his affair with Mme. Dambreuse:

'Il n'éprouvait pas à ses côtés ce ravissement de tout son être qui l'emportait vers Mme. Arnoux, ni le désordre gai où l'avait mis d'abord Rosanette. Mais il la convoitait comme une chose anormale et difficile, parce qu'elle était noble, parce qu'elle était riche, parce qu'elle était dévote,—se figurant qu'elle avait des délicatesses de sentiment, rares comme ses dentelles, avec des amulettes sur la peau et des pudeurs dans la dépravation'.

Frédéric's *dépravation* is uncommonly like Emma's *corruption*, and neither is the sign of a mature outlook.

It is not surprising that Frédéric has moments of revolt against Mme. Dambreuse' curious charms:

'Il reconnut alors ce qu'il s'était caché, la désillusion de ses sens. Il n'en feignait pas moins de grandes ardeurs; mais pour les ressentir, il lui fallait évoquer l'image de Rosanette ou de Mme. Arnoux'.

I do not think that Flaubert was a profound psychologist or that his work added materially to the discoveries about human nature made by his predecessors, but technically these passages are undeniably original. Without precisely revealing fresh combinations of feelings, they do throw a new light on our mental processes, on the formation of different states of mind. For it seems to me that Flaubert's insight into the association of ideas, the way in which the character's emotions for different women crystallize into images which alternately blend and clash, reinforce and destroy one another, anticipates some of Bergson's researches and points the way to Proust and Joyce. The 'deux musiques' looks forward to the 'petite phrase' of Vinteuil's sonata and Swann's love for Odette; Rosanette and Mme. Arnoux are present in Frédéric's mind in the same way as Andrée and Albertine are in the mind of the narrator in *A la Recherche du temps perdu*.

One of the worst faults of *l'Education sentimentale* is its diffuseness. There are pages when words revolve like pieces in a kaleidoscope without forming any pattern. Then, suddenly, each of the pieces falls into place and the pattern is there:

'Frédéric l'observait. La peau mate de son visage paraissait tendue, et d'une fraîcheur sans éclat, comme celle d'un fruit conservé'.

The homely image is a shrewd comment not only on Mme. Dambreuse, but on the society which produced her. This time

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every word is 'right'. The *tendue* makes us feel the strain under which all these people were living. The 'fraîcheur sans éclat', reinforcing the implications of 'la peau mate', suggests the curious artificiality of their lives, lives without genuine vitality depending on cosmetics and patent medicines; and though they possessed undeniable virtues, they were the virtues of 'un fruit conservé'.

This sentence acquires a symbolical value and in the manner of the novelists who followed him, Flaubert refers back to it later in the book, playing on its latent implications:

> 'Outre sa visite du soir, il lui en faisait quelquefois une autre vers la fin du jour; et il avait une gradation de joies à passer successivement par la grande porte, par la cour, par l'antichambre, par les deux salons; enfin, il arrivait dans son boudoir, discret comme un tombeau, tiède comme une alcôve, où l'on se heurtait aux capitons des meubles parmi toute sorte d'objets'.

The *tombeau*—a word that Flaubert sometimes used too melodramatically—gives the right sense of atmosphere here and the 'tiède comme une alcôve' the feeling of warm, stuffy, airless life. It is caught up a few pages later when we read:

> 'Il semblait à Frédéric, en descendant l'escalier, qu'il était devenu un autre homme, que la température embaumante des serres chaudes l'entourait, qu'il entrait définitivement dans le monde supérieur des adultères patriciens et des hautes intrigues'.

The 'serres chaudes' refers back to 'tiède comme une alcôve' and the 'fruit conservé'. The different *gradations* described in the middle passage enable the author to get underneath the skin of his hero, making us feel his snobbish satisfaction as he disposes, one after another, of the different obstacles which separate him from his lady's couch. But the boudoir—the goal for which he is making—is ironically also a *tombeau* because Frédéric's love contains the seeds of its own dissolution. 'En descendant l'escalier' in the last passage is also ironical. It is the moral *descent* which appears to lead *up* to the 'adultères patriciens' and the 'hautes intrigues'.

In another place we are told of Frédéric's departure from one of his meetings with Mme. Dambreuse:

> 'Il huma dans la rue une large bouffée d'air; et, par besoin d'un milieu moins artificiel, Frédéric se ressouvint qu'il devait une visite à la Maréchale'.

The tug-of-war between Mme. Dambreuse and Rosanette symbolizes the conflict between a dying society and what is real and vital in Frédéric's own make-up.[12]

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[12]Compare Mr. Edmund Wilson's interesting comment:

> 'Her (Rosanette's) liaison with Frédéric is a symbol of the disastrously unenduring union between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of which Marx . . . had written'. (*Op. cit.* p. 111).

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These passages recall an interesting comment on Rosanette's *cabinet de toilette*:

> 'On voyait, tout de suite, que c'était l'endroit de la maison le plus hanté, et comme son vrai centre moral'.

This sentence seems at first to place the *poule de luxe* with the same finality as Mme. Dambreuse; but this time Flaubert is not completely successful. He should have begun, one feels, with a brief description of the *cabinet de toilette* and this sentence should have been the climax of a passage in which every object had its place. Instead, the process is reversed. It is the opening sentence and is followed by:

> 'Une perse à grands feuillages tapissait les murs, les fauteuils et un vaste divan élastique; sur une table de marbre blanc s'espaçaient deux larges cuvettes en faïence bleue; des planches de cristal formant étagère au-dessus étaient encombrées par des fioles, des brosses, des peignes, des bâtons de cosmétique, des boîtes à poudre; le feu se mirait dans un haut psyché; un drap pendait en dehors d'une baignoire, et des senteurs de pâte d'amandes et de benjoin s'exhalaient'.

Flaubert was attempting something not unlike Swift's finale in the description of his mistress' boudoir, but he fails because he adopts the wrong method. His description not only robs individual objects of their significance, it destroys the effect which he has already created in the admirable opening sentence.

MARTIN TURNELL.

[To be concluded].

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

REFORM IT ALTOGETHER?

FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AT OXFORD, by G. B. Grundy (*Methuen*, 12/6).

What induced Dr. Grundy to add the sub-title 'an unconventional autobiography' to his account of a long career in Oxford remains, even after due meditation, obscure. But the glimpses of the university we are afforded in these genial reminiscences, coming as they do from one of such long standing and eminence there, carry undeniable evidence of authority. An aspirant to a teaching position in Oxford will gather a number of tips on how to become an amusing and popular fellow of any Senior Common Room, though, I suspect, many of the 'gems' here proffered are by now 'chestnuts' even there. Dr. Grundy writes in his preface, 'Having been a teacher in active work for fifty-four years of my life, I shall have to say something on that subject which may interest those in that profession'. The aspiring careerist will certainly not

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fail to note that the author's interest in golf was, to say the least, not unhelpful in gaining him recognition of his undoubted talents as an historian. And the scandalized outsider who may have doubted allegations appearing in *Scrutiny* about the reading taste of university teachers will here find satisfaction enough. We cease to wonder at the public honours paid to Mr. Wodehouse when we read such a private tribute as this: 'I have, so far as I know, read every book he ever wrote and enjoyed them all'.

Though Dr. Grundy takes himself strangely seriously, even solemnly at times, for a professed connoisseur of humour, he is in many ways so admirable a character that the drawbacks of being a 'good mixer' do not strike one so forcibly as the corresponding defects of the contrary reaction of the academically gifted—withdrawal into a pose of intellectual superiority, the self-confessed vice of the late Professor Collingwood, who published his autobiography in 1939 (*cf. Scrutiny*, Vol. VIII, No. 3). Both men were tutors, lecturers and examiners in the Oxford Final School known popularly as 'Greats'. The only excuse for this notice is to return to the theme already dealt with in *Scrutiny* by Mr. J. G. Maxwell (Vol. IX, No. 3), the upshot of whose remarks tallies closely with the judgment passed by Dr. Grundy that the study of *Literæ Humaniores* is very valuable and that while a careful watch should be maintained on the possible emergence of abuses, on the whole things are quite satisfactory as they are.

We are thus faced with the curious position that whereas it seems the English School in Cambridge requires substantial modification before it can satisfy the demands of educational reform, 'Greats' in Oxford appears to stand (with certain modifications) as a model of what a university should offer. Yet for the reader who accepts substantially the position outlined in *Education and the University* it should be clear that the principles invoked for the reform of the teaching of English have an immediate bearing on the teaching of Latin and Greek and that the reforms postulated for an English School should for the same reasons be demanded of a Final Classical School.

Mr. Maxwell appears to have forestalled this criticism by classifying it among 'suggestions how "Greats" might be induced to wither away into something else'. Though it is conceivable that supporters of the *status quo* in Cambridge might use similar language about the proposed reforms of the English School there. Mr. Maxwell refers to the prestige and long tradition of 'Greats'. Professor Collingwood (and in this he and Dr. Grundy are one) describes this tradition as follows: 'The "Greats" school was not meant as a training for professional scholars and philosophers; it was meant as a training for public life in the Church, at the Bar, in the Civil Service, and in Parliament'. And Dr. Grundy prints in an appendix to his autobiography a list of his pupils who have since reached high and important positions in public life. Viewed merely as a preparation for such careers, there is, of course, no case for reform as long as the qualifications necessary to obtain

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such posts are what they are. Similarly the Cambridge English Tripos, viewed merely as a stepping-stone to journalism, belles-lettres, the writing of 'high-class advertisements' and detective fiction, is above criticism.

A more serious ground for hesitancy in suggesting changes is that even as things are the Oxford Classical School does go a long way—compared with other schools, a very long way towards meeting the demands of those concerned for university education. In wishing to re-open the question I do not in the least suggest that Mr. Maxwell was guilty of complacency in finding on the whole so little need for reform. On the other hand, the possibilities offered by Latin and Greek literature, philosophy and history as a means of acquiring a humane education as distinct from a high public position do not appear to me to be immediately obvious especially in the way in which they are studied in the Oxford Classical School. At any rate an application of some of the principles underlying Mr. Leavis's book to the teaching of the Classics in the school of 'Greats' seems worth undertaking.

In approaching the literature of the past Mr. Leavis starts from the position that 'to initiate into the idea of living tradition except in relation to the present is hardly possible'. The Oxford School appears at first sight to have grasped this principle firmly. Indeed Professor Collingwood made it one of his principle charges against the dominant school of Oxford philosophers that they assumed the problems raised by the ancient Greek philosophers to be eternal and so the same as those facing us to-day. Dr. Grundy grounds his claim for the utility of the study of ancient Greek history on the fact that so many of the problems facing, for example, Athenian democracy in the fifth century B.C. are instructively similar to those of modern capitalist states. Yet, as far as the philosophy is concerned, without in the least following the late Professor Collingwood in his peculiar philosophy of history, I cannot help feeling that he is right in suggesting that we cannot understand Plato, for example, without placing him in his historical context. Mr. Maxwell in his review came to a similar conclusion.

It is not enough, however, to make the study of philosophy more historical. Everything turns on the kind of history we cultivate. Here the remarks made by Mr. Leavis on the use of history in the English School are directly applicable. For, as Dr. Meiklejohn saw in *The Experimental University* (what a pity he could not have performed his experiment in Oxford), the aim of a study of Greece and Rome in the framework of a humane education must be the *civilization* they embody. To know what happened, to establish cause and effect, to trace development and decline are, of course, essential. But they are the means and not the end. The end is after all a grasp of the values such civilizations embodied and by contrast and comparison with other civilizations and our own to establish a sense of an absolute or constant.

The mere phrase suggests something pat and ready-made, something which could be lectured about. Though perhaps by now

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it is not necessary in these pages to repeat constantly the results of previous discussions. A reference to Mr. Eliot's *Four Quartets* will serve as a hint. A humane education is an approach to an understanding of such terms as 'wisdom'. And a study of the classics affords possibilities of grasping what, for example, urbanity is. To say all this is merely to enforce the point that the choice of Aristotle's *Ethics*, Plato's *Republic*, Thucydides and Herodotus, to confine ourselves for the moment to the Greek texts, can only be justified if they are taken as convenient starting points for a study of the whole civilization. ('It would be a study in concrete terms of the relations between the economic, the political, the moral, the spiritual, religion, art and literature, and would involve a critical pondering of standards and key-concepts—order, community, culture, civilization and so on').

This in turn involves a greater concentration on the training of literary sensibility. Mr. Maxwell has pointed out the tendency in Oxford to lay aside all literary considerations as soon as the preliminary examination (Mods.) is over and to treat the texts as quarries for philosophical and historical points. Yet even if the texts were considered primarily as literature a radical difficulty would remain. The limitations of a study of languages so remote from us as Greek and Latin have not, I think, been sufficiently generally understood. 'Aeschylus can never be read like Shakespeare'. Of course, one is inclined to murmur without grasping what the admission involves. It involves nothing less than abandoning the claim that the study of the classics can foster the growth of that delicacy of response on which all finer judgment depends. Once we grasp this damning fact we see at once a partial explanation of the taste in English exhibited by classical scholars. In a recent study of Horace, the author, an eminent Cambridge scholar, discovers a marked affinity between Houseman's poetry and that of Horace. It would seem as if the only fruitful approach to an author such as Horace is through Jonson, Marvell and Pope. Before rejecting such a reversal of the normal view, a scrutiny of the principle works of literary criticism by classical scholars in the last fifty years might be made, and then, I think, it would be conceded that the study of Latin and Greek does not seem to equip lecturers in the universities with the preliminary qualifications for expressing critical judgments and guiding students in this difficult and indispensable work.

Further, the study of a civilization must lead to some sort of judgment. ('The student capable of appreciating such an observation will not find the summing-up of the century a simple business, yielding an obvious quantity as the result'). Such a total synthesis is not easy to come by. When after reading for 'Greats' I came across the passage in *The Root and the Flower* dealing with the limitations of Greek humanism, I was taken aback. How far this would apply to more gifted students I cannot say.

It follows from the demand for contrast without which no evaluation of a past civilization can emerge that the study of Roman

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civilization is in place in such a course of studies. Yet, to my mind, even so more is required. Mr. Leavis writes of 'an inward and subtle initiation into the nature and significance of tradition' as one of the *desiderata*. The advantage of beginning with the *integrae fontes* is clear. Yet to remain at the well-head will not do. A hindrance at the outset is the narrowness of outlook of many of the teachers. Professor Collingwood was, I imagine, almost unique in lecturing in both history and philosophy. Perhaps this division of studies is inevitable. Yet it is a criticism of the spirit in which philosophy and history are 'taught' that Dr. Grundy and Mr. Maxwell are expressing a majority view in showing marked preference when they were students for one side of their studies. Dr. Grundy took so little interest in philosophy that he was, as he says, rightly given a Second. Yet even so, if the evil of specialization could be overcome on the lines proposed by Mr. Leavis who also counts on the support of specialists in philosophy and history, there seems something wrong with a life-long study of Greek if it leads Dr. Grundy to write, 'To me personally Andrew Lang has always seemed to be the most beautiful translator of Greek poetry into English verse. It was a great pity that he did not translate many more of the verses of the Anthology. Such as he has translated come as near perfection as a man can get'.

Of course, far more than the ability to recognize the presence or absence of the qualities one discovers in the classics in the work of one's contemporaries is involved in Mr. Leavis's phrase. With an eye on Dr. Meiklejohn one could see what might be done. Yet the students' time is short and it would be a poor reform which would turn an admirably simple curriculum into an overloaded course of indigestible material. It would be something if the 'Greats' man were brought to recognize the fact that for a humane education the study of the Classics is not enough and if the course were so designed as to show how the understanding of the ancient world could illuminate and interpret the course of later civilization. It would be just as essential on this view to include the critical writings of Mr. Eliot among the 'set books' in 'Greats' as in the English School.

It might seem that the desired equipose has already been introduced into 'Greats' in the study of modern metaphysics and political theory. Yet the various criticisms made by the late Professor Collingwood (with enormous reservations) and the judicious remarks of Mr. Maxwell suggest that any reform of 'Greats' would have to jettison a great deal of the work done under the head of modern philosophy. It would be mere presumption for the ignorant and incompetent to pronounce the greater part of philosophy teaching in 'Greats' profoundly inhumane. Yet with all its obvious bias Professor Collingwood's diatribe cannot so lightly be got rid of, it seems to me, as Mr. Maxwell suggested in his review. The fascination in following the close discussions of the younger dons in my time or of taking part in semi-private discussions with elder giants such as Pritchard was undeniably

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great. The sharpening of the wits, the dialectical exercise, the training in accuracy and precision in the use of words, were, as far as they went, beneficially exhilarating and stimulating. Yet the theories of knowledge and the problem of truth thrashed out in lectures, tutorials and discussions led me to Collingwood's conclusion that it was all an ingenious and trivial game. And if Collingwood's verdict is dismissed, there is Santayana's, whose remarks on Bertrand Russell in *Winds of Doctrine* still strike me as of wider and contemporary significance. I have nothing but admiration for the acuteness of the tools thus put into the students' hands. But will they serve if 'the aim is to produce a mind that will approach the problems of modern civilization with an understanding of their origins, a maturity of outlook, and, not a nostalgic addiction to the past, but a sense of human possibilities, difficult of achievement, that traditional cultures bear witness to and that it would be disastrous, in a breach of continuity, to lose sight of for good?'

These scattered reflections on the subject of 'Greats' should perhaps have been cast in the form of an open letter to Mr. Maxwell. Yet one cannot resist his plea that the individual student is hardly in a position to say more than he said. It is greatly to be desired that those who like Dr. Grundy have a long and wide experience should lay their hands on their hearts and take themselves for a moment to task in the spirit of Mr. Leavis's formula. Can any teacher in the school of 'Greats' engaging to-day in the appropriate stock-taking feel comfortable as he contemplates, in relation to the notions he likes to entertain of his functions and responsibility, what is actually, his searching of his experience tells him, effected in this name? Even where philosophy and history have been emancipated from linguistics and philology, are things as they should be? Has 'Greats' been justifying its recognized position as the chief school of the humanities (*Literæ humaniores*) and its key responsibility for education? Can it even be said, by standards appropriate to the university level, to have been providing an *education* at all?

Dr. Grundy's and Mr. Maxwell's satisfaction is, of course, justified if they glance at *Redbrick University*, for instance, (though the evidence of D. H. Lawrence's early education should serve as a warning against excessive complacency) or even at continental or American universities. The freedom and flexibility of the whole programme and methods of education as practised in 'Greats' cannot be too highly praised. Yet if we glance the other way? Does not *Education and the University* provide a sterner challenge? Is there not at least a call for a large-scale enquiry? For the collection of evidence from Seniors and Juniors? Dr. Grundy shows little but impatient contempt for the various cries for reform which cropped up during his fifty-five years. Yet even such a rigid Conservative as he claims to be was foremost in support of sensible innovations and did good work, for example, in the foundation of the school of modern languages. There is no reason to suppose

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that the teaching body is closed to an appeal of this kind. And after all the call is not for 'Greats' to make way for a different school, but to become what it always has been, the Oxford ideal of a humane education.

H. A. MASON.

FROM PLAYGROUND TO GRAVE

THE UNQUIET GRAVE, by Palinurus (Hamish Hamilton, 7/6).

THE CONDEMNED PLAYGROUND, Essays 1927-1944, by Cyril Connolly (Routledge, 10/6).

Both Mr. Connolly and Palinurus are interested in the same way in literature, and in those considerations of a general sort which must arise when quality is discussed. Theirs too, one is justified in supposing, is the only type of success which those who cover similar ground are at present able to achieve. They have contrived to diffuse their type of culture and their critical habits amongst a far wider public than any other contemporary literary group with pretensions to seriousness. In doing so, they have come to represent the only class of modern critical writers whose practice has some of the prestige value of a limited commercial success. Among those readers who now wish to discriminate, the sorts of judgment made by Palinurus and Mr. Connolly would probably receive general assent. At the level at which we are discussing literature and its ancillary problems, Palinurus and Mr. Connolly, along with those men-of-letters who may be relied upon to receive their work with enthusiasm, stand for the contemporary common reader at his most articulate. They have helped to create a certain demand for that which they consider to be of value, and at once represent and control the taste of a very large proportion of the serious reading public. As types of the common reader, their judgments confirm his, and may decide his. Should he prove refractory, they have more chance than most of suggesting to him what opinion is best, from the points of view of both taste and advantage. With this in mind, one is inclined to take these two volumes seriously, and in the case of *The Unquiet Grave*, at least, one hopes more seriously than it was intended. Yet, Palinurus presents this work without a hint of oblique criticism of the type of mind which it displays. A writer with his pretensions can rarely have dished up his shortcomings with so little garnish.

The enthusiasm with which *The Unquiet Grave* was originally received is preserved on the dust-cover in lengthy quotations from early reviews. One comment, including the phrase 'a superb gift for words and epigrams', was made on the wireless; the others come from well-known pens in the most widely read literary columns. The book is praised because its author is said to be 'enchantingly clever', his prose style is said to be 'taut and supple, disciplined and sensuous', and he is considered, in this 'beautifully written

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book', to have made 'a genuine addition' to the 'world's stock of profitable introspection'. The quotations above are from four different hands. His prose style, wit and introspection are in fact those features of this work of Palinurus which should be discussed. *The Unquiet Grave* is a loosely-composed mixture of self-examination, confession, reminiscence, quotation and aphorism, a 'word-cycle' vaguely connected in structure with the story of Palinurus, the pilot of Aeneas. Its prose style is in the aesthetic 'fine writing' tradition. It has strong affinities with George Moore and Pater, and, in those passages containing general comments of a philosophical nature, owes something to E. M. Forster and to some of the essays of Virginia Woolf. Another debt is to that current literary journalism which exploits the critic's personality, and tends to sacrifice coherence in the presentation of ideas to a 'well-turned' phrase. Now if you like that sort of thing, then that is what you like, and there might be no point in displaying its defects again here. Considering, however, the extreme adulation this work has received, it is perhaps desirable to express one dissentient view. The pretensions of the author may now be discussed with reference to his performance. His first sentence runs as follows:

> 'The more books we read, the sooner we perceive that the true function of a writer is to produce a master-piece, and that no other task is of any consequence'.

This is followed by a list of works to which Palinurus would give the name 'master-piece'—works written by twelve writers amongst whom are Horace, Virgil, Montaigne, Villon, Pope and Baudelaire. After considering these, Palinurus returns to his primary interest, himself, and reflects:

> 'Even though none of the conditions for producing a master-piece be present . . . (the compiler of the list) . . . can at least attempt to work at the same level of intention as the Sacred Twelve. Spiritualise the Earthbound, Palinurus, and don't aim too high'.

How far he is able to work at the level of intention which he prescribes for himself may best be judged by three samples of his work, the first showing the quality of his prose when he consciously attempts to write well, the second exemplifying his 'enchanting' cleverness, and the third in his philosophical manner.

> 'There, in his Tumulus, lies the last Celtic prince, wrapped in his race's age-long death-wish; his great vault stones carved with indecipherable warnings; runes of serpents and oak-leaves, of wave eddies and wind-patterns, finger prints of giant hands—O powerless to save! And that night at Vannes, the cave-wedding—Summoque ululârunt vertice Nymphae. She with sad grave gem-like beauty, and happiness soon to be thrown away'.

> 'Hôtel de l'Université for American College girls, Hôtel de Londres with its chestnut tree in the courtyard, Hôtel Jacob

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for wasting much time; Hôtel de Savoie, Hôtel Delambre, Hôtel de la Louisiane; central heated Stations of the Cross . . . '

'It is no answer to say that we are meant to rid ourselves of self: religions like Christianity and Buddhism are desperate stratagems of failure, the failure of men to be men. They may be operative as escapes from a problem, as flights from guilt but they cannot turn out to be a revelation of our destiny. What should we think of dogs' monasteries, hermit cats, vegetarian tigers?'

The first, suggesting everything and stating nothing, is a mere gesture in the direction of Pater, even to the cadence and the wholesale adoption of his 'poetic' and insipid vocabulary. I hope that the taste of the second advertises its quality sufficiently in the quotation. The third pretends to be an argument, but in fact the terms mean nothing, since the author has no definition of what he means by the nature of Man ('the failure of men to be men' is the phrase which blandly begs the question). There is no point in quoting more. The reader whose reaction is still uncertain may as well buy a copy of *The Unquiet Grave* and try out the cumulative effect of pages of similar comment.

Lastly, consider the nature of Palinurus's 'profitable introspection'. Here is a typical passage:

' August 30th. Morning tears return; spirits at their lowest ebb. Approaching forty, sense of total failure; not a writer but a ham actor whose performance is clotted with egotism . . . '

One does not doubt that this is how he imagines he feels—he forgets very frequently the level of intention at which he wishes to appear to work. This is the way in which his sense of guilt, frustration, anxiety, the bad and bitter feeling which he calls Angst shows itself; the effects of this self-dissatisfaction, when self is the prime interest, are 'misery, disgust, tears, guilt'. There are, however, 'temporary cures':

'Temporary cures. (1) Lunch with a new friend, literary talk, gossip, *i.e.* appeals to vanity; (2) Art (Renoir landscapes), the true escape into *Timelessness*; (3) The office personality, (Alibi Ike); (4) Old friends, relationships dating from before the Fall'.

Emotion manifested and dispelled at this level scarcely merits further comment here. Self-examination without discipline or definite purpose beyond discovering self, is likely to discover very little, but with a great deal of fuss. Palinurus examines himself and his perceptions with reference to nothing beyond a makeshift and uncertain system of values, built upon the very moods and sensations which it proposes to describe and evaluate. Palinurus has an aphorism covering the matter:

'Complacent mental laziness is the English disease'.

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One can only assume charitably that he does not realize the extent to which so deliberate a self-revelation makes him appear disingenuous and dishonest. Nor is his reception by those whose comments appear to recommend him, likely to draw his attention to the ease with which such an impression can be created.

Mr. Cyril Connolly's collection of essays and articles is a selection of those products of seventeen years of writing and thinking which seem to him most worth preserving. It contains a number of essays written chiefly as literary journalism, reviews and so on, some parodies, a fragment of a diary and other casually written scraps which have recommended themselves to him. Mr. Connolly believes that 'the distinction between true criticism and creation is non-existent', that his merits as a critic are 'somewhat practical and earthy', and he wishes that he had not 'written brightly, because I was asked to do, about so many bad books'. (It would be interesting to know who asked him to do this). The title of this book is suggested by, first 'the literary scene of the 1930's', and second, 'that leafy spielraum of Chelsea where I worked and wandered'. Like Palinurus, he owes something to E. M. Forster, whose conception (in *What I Believe*) of an 'aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky' leads to the deliberate and politic cultivation of a version of these qualities, and thence to a type of presumptuousness conflicting with Mr. Forster's ideal code of personal behaviour. In the critical field too, Mr. Forster, as transmuted by Mr. Connolly, might not easily recognize himself. Mr. Connolly's own conception of his qualities as a critic makes a passage like the following, from his introduction, even more surprising. He refers to himself as 'a low-swung basset, who hunts by scent and keeps his nose to the ground', yet writes:

> ' . . . for Art is man's noblest attempt to preserve the Imagination from Time, to make unbreakable toys of the mind, mud-pies which endure . . . '

The connection with Forster is apparent, though I cannot remember, even in *The Longest Journey*, any Forsterian character having flown his kite so high. (Mr. Connolly thinks, at one point, that *The Longest Journey* is Mr. Forster's second-best novel).

Mr. Connolly's system of values may be said to be founded on the premises and attitudes stated and implied in Mr. Forster's pamphlet. He has that rather dramatized conception of a sensitive minority isolated in a wicked and chaotic world, trying by a scepticism concerning ideologies, a belief in personal relationships, and the sensitiveness recognizable as such in 'the leafy spielraum of Chelsea', to preserve the values of civilized life. The result is an emphasis on personality which personality alone cannot bear. An over-simplified view of the sorts of issues which the practice of criticism involves is one result. Take, for example, the following:

> 'The authors I most enjoy writing about are first, those great, lonely, formal artists who spit in the eye of their century,

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> and after them the wild and exquisitely gifted young writers who come to an untimely end through passion, and lastly those wise epicureans who combine taste with the gossiping good sense of the world, and whose graceful books are but the shadow of their intimate communion with their friends or with nature'.

Some of this may be applicable in some cases to the features of individual writers, and may constitute a legitimate if dull sort of criticism. But note what Mr. Connolly has done. He has observed, in his reading, that he enjoys responding most to certain qualities in large numbers of writers, responses which, in fact become his stock-in-trade of critical reaction, as his fondness for words like 'exquisite' and 'graceful' shows. On his fondness for these sensations in reading he builds a system, in which the qualities which excite them become standards of judgment. What he fails to realize is that the qualities in question are not isolable, and lose their authenticity when they become an object in themselves, and not, as they are in the authors from whom he would derive them, the comparatively superficial features of much profounder and more complex preoccupations. One needs only consider Baudelaire as 'one of those great, lonely formal artists who spit in the eye of their century' to realize that criticism on this basis leaves out almost everything worth saying, the desired sensation produced by reading him being so overwhelming that the critic wishes only to read into his work the qualities he most admires. Sensitiveness, though the word is becoming difficult to use, is, of course, indispensable to a critic, but it cannot be self-consciously pursued alone without becoming a travesty of itself. Mr. Connolly never brings his own range of personal reaction into comparative relationship with any coherent external system of values. He tends to extract from what he reads simply a confirmation of a personal fantasy, the sensation which he parodies in a sentence in one of his articles:

> ' "But this is *me*", I remember saying, holding up a slim volume. "Why haven't I been told about this before, Dadie? Who is this T. S. Eliot?" '

This is a parody. Yet, does it differ essentially from his reaction to reading Joyce?:

> ' . . . for me any criticism of *Ulysses* will be affected by a wet morning in Florence, when in the empty library of a villa with the smell of wood-smoke, the faint eaves-drip, I held the uncouth volume dazedly open in the big arm-chair—Narcissus with his pool before him'

If what I have already said about the dangers inherent in this form of criticism by mood and sensation be true, it would be right to expect that Mr. Connolly can scarcely succeed as the 'low-swung basset' of criticism, that when he stops capitalizing his pleasant sensations and turns to make a statement, a certain poverty of thought will be apparent. He parodies at one point a type of

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common and commonplace criticism:

> ' . . . she seems to be a writer of very delicate intention, and has brought to a difficult subject a restraint, a distinction . . . ' etc.

Compare this with his own serious comments on Evelyn Waugh:

> 'He has a fresh, crisp style, a gift for creating character, a mastery of dialogue, a melancholy and dramatic sense of life . . . '

Different clichés, but each says as much as the other. It would have been much wiser for Mr. Connolly to leave his parodies out, since quite apart from their essential triviality, they are not easily distinguishable from his normal manner, except by the absence of highly coloured chunks of prose. Yet even in his parodies he rarely pillories the jejune literary chit-chat which appears again and again in his criticism. An example:

> 'Henry James, semi-complete. I get an inconceivable pleasure from a Henry James book when I am able to finish it, but too often I can only flounder on a few yards and then have to retreat . . . For others in this plight I recommend his long short stories . . . Another remedy is to read anecdotes of Henry James'.

I would suggest that the real remedy, for Mr. Connolly, is to leave Henry James alone, since there are so many other novelists from whom he derives satisfaction—for example—

> ' . . . all Miss Elizabeth Bowen's ironical and delicate studies, and all Rosamund Lehmann, another natural writer, and *Frost in May*, by Antonia White, *Orphan Island*, the best novel of Miss Macaulay . . . '

It may be objected that this volume has been written over seventeen years, and that much that was at first original may now appear common-place; it may also be said that some of this is good in intention, and the work of a younger and less-developed writer than the present Mr. Connolly. The fact remains that, though some of *The Condemned Playground* was written in 1927 it was collected and given its author's blessing in 1944, and consequently is not unjustly treated as representative. I have left out most of his worst lapses in quoting, and generally have dealt with only a few of his many vulnerable points. Even this would scarcely have been worth doing had one not had in mind the conditions under which the common reader is reading to-day, and the conditions under which the young writer is writing. Those conditions would be improved if it were possible to make more of the reading public appreciate the full significance of the title of the first part of *The Unquiet Grave*, and to compare it with what follows. The title is, *Ecce Gubernator*.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

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THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

THE BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL : To-day and To-morrow, by H. Davies (Methuen, 6/-).

From their inception the grammar schools have offered to the sons of both the poor and the well-to-do an education leading to the professions and the universities. This field was limited during the public schools boom at the close of the nineteenth century, when the rich found in the new and revived boarding schools an outlet for conspicuous consumption and a means of getting rid of their children for two-thirds of the year. After 1902 when secondary education became a public responsibility a few of the old grammar schools became 'public' schools. But the majority continued to provide an education for those who could not afford or did not wish to go to the boarding schools, and to their ranks were added many new grammar schools founded and maintained by local education authorities and often called county schools. In the years between the European wars many of the secondary schools maintained or supported by public funds began successfully to compete with (and in some cases to ape) the public schools. The gap between these latter and independent schools on the one hand and the maintained schools on the other began to narrow, and there was some interchange of staff; parents who did not like boarding schools and others who saw that the day school could often offer a course that academically at least was as good as that available in boarding schools sent their sons to the local secondary school.

The quality then of the maintained and aided grammar school was steadily improving. (This review will not deal with those secondary schools which receive direct grants from the Ministry of Education; it is concerned in the main with the 1,300 or so grammar schools supported entirely or very largely by public money). The State provided much of the cost and through the Board of Education's inspectorate saw to it that value for money was given. The better local education authorities gave their schools a wide range of freedom, and this accounts for a good deal of such success as the schools have had. The system proved that State-supported enterprises need not necessarily be dull or mediocre. There were enough of them to provide for the great majority of children capable of profiting from the specifically academic education that it is the grammar school's job to give. They were far from perfect—as Mr. Davies shows—but given freedom from examination and from other restrictions they might have developed well. I suggest that a proper line of development for the best of them would have been to qualify for a direct grant from the Ministry—not necessarily under the arrangements at present applicable to direct grant.

Mr. Davies deals with the grammar schools only since 1902 and it still remains for someone to survey their history and to assess their contribution to education. Mr. Davies is concerned to

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discuss the existing position and to make suggestions for improvement. He cites Sir Richard Livingstone's question: Why are we an uneducated nation? and points to the familiar evidence from films, press, B.B.C. and politics. He asks whether there is any reason to believe that the ten of fifteen per cent. of children who attend grammar schools are in the light of this evidence any better than the children who leave school at fourteen; and he concludes that most grammar school products are lamentably deficient in the power to create new tastes and interests. One of the aims therefore of his book is 'to try to find out why, in spite of the expenditure of so much public money, our grammar schools are failing in their most important function'.

He is candid about the schools' shortcomings. In an ironical chapter 'How a grammar school works' Mr. Davies describes one of those institutions (how far typical it is difficult to say) which are in effect cramming shops for the production of successful candidates for school certificate and higher school certificate. Mathematics and science dominate the time-table; geography is seriously undervalued; 'Physical training is given the minimum amount of time: Music and Art are regarded as of little importance. The whole time-table is calculated to produce the best possible results in the School Certificate examination. No parent can complain that his son is compelled to waste his time in unprofitable studies of an aesthetic nature'. After criticism of other features, the chapter ends with the observation that 'A year in the sixth form has helped to turn many an ignorant and loutish schoolboy into a young man with at least the glimmerings of a cultured outlook and some perception of the duties of democratic citizenship'. In other chapters the school certificate examination is condemned as the greatest single hindrance to the work of the grammar schools—for reasons which will not be summarized here as they are no doubt familiar to readers of *Scrutiny*—and the conclusion is reached that 'The schools produce far too many sixth form boys who have been so over-pressed that their personalities and interests have had little time to expand, with the result that they make ineffective leaders and lack general culture. We have all met boys who are good scientists, mathematicians or linguists, but who are, and remain, fundamentally uneducated'.

This is the position of the grammar schools to-day—overweighted by examinations, their true aim distorted by over-emphasis on the sciences. The aim of education, says Mr. Davies, is 'the development of the potentialities of the human personality, as far as it is possible at the stage which the individual has reached'. Later he quotes the Spens Report on methods of teaching best fitted to produce 'a generation of young men and women sensitive to beauty and to moral values and trained to concentrate their attention, to think consecutively and readily, to express ideas exactly and coherently and to exercise due caution in accepting evidence and drawing conclusions'. All this is of course in rather general terms; and despite a chapter on curriculum and teaching

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methods, it is not quite clear what is the special contribution of the grammar school to the attaining of these ends. In condemning the outworn school certificate examination, Mr. Davies comes near to throwing out the baby with the bath water:

> 'The widespread belief in a "liberal education" and the pathetic fallacy that an orthodox school certificate curriculum somehow supplies it are largely responsible for this educational uniformity. Useless knowledge has become, in some mysterious way, superior to useful knowledge, and headmasters are very shy of anything which savours of vocational training'.

Mr. Davies does not elaborate his implied approval of vocational training. The trouble about the latter is that nowadays purely technical training just isn't education at all—though it's not necessarily incompatible with education. So far as vocational training given in apprenticeship or technical college is concerned—take any dozen boys who have spent a couple of years acquiring a trade, and compare them with any dozen boys of the same age who have spent the time at school, and the difference will be plain. So far as I know no one has tried to work out methods of making technical training into something educational. Of course in the past technical training was in some cases inseparable from true education. We have all read our *Wheelwright's Shop* these days, and it is hardly necessary to point out how the acquisition of skill in this trade embodied a development of the whole person—a training of the senses, the imparting of standards of workmanship and the ability to judge men as well as timber. Education cannot now be 'automatic' as it used to be.

The function of a grammar school is to provide an academic —that is, a cultural—as opposed to vocational—training. Under the Education Act it should fulfil this purpose more exclusively and more efficiently than before; now that we are promised technical and modern secondary schools, the grammar school can get on with its original job. Merely manipulative scientists are ten-a-penny to-day; as writers in these pages have so often insisted we need more and more humane education, developing the free, unspecialized intelligence, that can 'place' and use the thousand and one complicating specialisms and sciences. The scientific bias that is common in the grammar school curriculum squeezes out education; a stronger course in the English subjects is needed, including (besides what comes under the formal heading) geography linked with history, which in turn should be integrated with music and the study of architecture—all leading to an understanding of the present and making available to the child his cultural heritage. (What proportion of children in ——shire for instance have ever heard 'The Seeds of Love'?). At the most practical level even the production of technicians, narrowly trained, may be futile; a particular skill may be outdated in a year or two, and the demand we are told is for mobility and adaptability. A lively conception of a liberal education is required, not uniform and standardized

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for all types of school, but fertilizing in diverse ways the activities of all schools. Without some such vitamin content, scholastic pabulum is jejune. And impractical—for a liberal education is necessary to enable the student to get the best out of his vocational training; the complaint of Professor Ryle (writing on 'The Future of Medical Education' in the *British Medical Journal*) is all too familiar:

> 'With a growing tendency to embark at too early an age upon specialized work for the First M.B., the general education of the student has assumed too low a level. Good literary standards, general knowledge, knowledge of languages, and interest in problems outside his own necessary sciences, do not, with rare exceptions, characterize the equipment of the medical student. This is evident in his written work and examination papers, and often enough in his conversation, his reluctance or inability. to share the literary, artistic, or socio-political enthusiasms of others in his generation, and often in his intellectual standards subsequent to qualification'.

Several factors militate against the provision of education. In the grammar schools, a curriculum that is a hotch-potch, and the excessively high standard demanded for entrance scholarships to the universities. In all schools, the pressure of a commercial environment—the lucrative distractions offered by Saturday morning cinema clubs, advertising and professional sport. This is of course where good boarding schools score tremendously; they provide a milieu which is educative quite apart from whatever may go on in school periods. They relieve children from the insistent attack upon their minds and pockets. Very few day schools can offer as satisfactory an upbringing as that available in the best boarding schools. Mr. Davies doesn't agree:

> 'The boarding school suffers from one serious disadvantage to-day. At a time when educational thinkers are concerned to link more closely the training given at school with the outside world, so that the pupil shall feel its reality and its relevance to his own life, boarding schools, except for unusual cases, seem out of place. It can hardly be denied that the boarding school cuts off its pupils from contact with the world, and encloses them in an artificial atmosphere—indeed to some this is their great virtue'.

Argument on this particular point is perhaps futile, but it must be asserted (if any generalization is possible) that the product of the boarding school is at least as aware of his social responsibilities as his fellows in the day schools, and often much better equipped to fulfil them. However the chapter from which the quotation above is taken is not one of Mr. Davies' best informed sections.

Much more acceptable is his contention that 'every effort must be made to raise the standards in staff and staffing ratios in the grammar schools until they equal those in the public schools'. Many

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independent schools are better than many state schools because they are independent and because they spend more money. One wants the state school to have the freedom and resources of the institutions which private enterprise has produced. Unfortunately since the grammar schools were 'pearlharboured' by the Act it is unlikely that they will be able to maintain even their present modest level. Before the Act, those concerned with the grammar schools expected at the worst that they would have to mark time until the new secondary schools were levelled up in staff, buildings and equipment. They did not expect what has actually happened—a levelling down which provides evidence for Professor Hayek to say 'I told you so'. The means to this levelling-down were indicated in a review of Mr. Newsom's *Willingly to School* in these pages six months ago—a review incidentally which was charged with being alarmist by a non-teaching reader, to whom it must now be evident that the direction of the wind is unchanged and its force increased. The implications of the regulations whereby the Act is operated are clearer than ever. The Ministry has applied to the grammar schools a set of restrictions, many of them designed to cope with conditions which exist only in some primary schools, which hamper the development of secondary schools along lines of educational advance. Patently they are the outcome, not of recommendation by inspectors that they are desirable on educational grounds, but of political and trade union pressure. Imposed by the coalition government, they would have been removed by any new government which was alive to the needs of education; they have been damned by responsible opinion everywhere and by informed M.P.s of all parties. But the Ministry does not budge. One can only conclude that its obstinacy is due not to the advice of the permanent officials but to political enthusiasm for equality of conditions as between all types of secondary school. Since it would have taken years—if it were ever seriously intended—to level up the new secondary schools, and since something must be done to satisfy the demands of the teachers' union, the easier path of levelling-down has been taken.

The Act won support all round because it promised among other things some urgent reforms such as a reduction in the size of classes and improvements in the primary schools, and the raising of the school leaving age—to prevent the half-baking of children and ejecting them on to the labour market with the inevitable consequence of stunting the child's growth, spiritual, moral and physical. For these two aims, not in themselves necessarily productive of education, but vital preliminaries to education, teachers were needed in quantity. The coalition government, one supposes, had to produce some constructive move, and could agree only on education; hence the Act, a good Act if it can be operated. But after the event it looks now as if it may have been an error. The most pressing reforms could have been secured, and perhaps more effectively, by a less pretentious measure. As it is, they are in jeopardy. Real agreement and co-operation could have been

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attained between various sections of teachers. As it is, the Act which was supposed to unify the profession has split it for years to come. The staffs of the schools which are the subject of this review should now have been refitting to concentrate on their own tasks; as it is they are troubled not only by genuine grievances but by the fear that their schools will cease to be educational agents and will become instead pipe lines for the state's social services. Instead of being ready for needed changes they are suspicious of any move because they have seen how an innocent-seeming act can be used to further evident political aims.

It is very easy for those most affected by the Act to lose a sense of proportion. But on the most dispassionate possible view one cannot escape the conclusion that the attack on the grammar schools—unless it is called off—will set back education everywhere. Is it too late to ask the Minister to reconsider?

DENYS THOMPSON.

SYMBOLISM AND APOCALYPSE

HŒLDERLIN'S SYMBOLISM: An Essay, by E. L. Stahl (B. H. Blackwell, Oxford, 3/-).

This very useful little book should be of interest to the general reader of poetry as well as to the student of Hölderlin. Mr. Stahl's account of Hölderlin's developing use of the symbol is applicable to other poets in other languages, and the extracts he gives from Hölderlin's theoretical writings on the nature of poetry are of the illuminating kind we often receive from practitioners of genius.

Mr. Stahl says very truly 'the critic . . . is faced with the task of discovering the appropriate method of displaying the qualities of Hölderlin's poetry. The usual methods do not seem adequate to this end . . .' It is a more difficult proposition than one might think: Hölderlin's mature poetry is peculiarly individual, unmistakably his, but when the critic comes to analyse it, he finds himself feebly referring to syntactical characteristics, the significance of Zeus, Ether, Light, the idea of alternating day and night, of the absence and presence of the gods. So Mr. Stahl chooses this way out: 'If we note his symbols, trace their development, and explain their terms of reference, we shall enter the world of his thought without diverting attention from his poetry', since he is fully aware of the essential fact that 'what matters is Hölderlin's poetic thought, not his thought as such'. Actually Hölderlin allows comparatively little rope to the kind of commentator whose only concern is 'the thought behind the poetry': there is a certain tautness, solidness, compactness about his beliefs which saves him from the Roman Holiday of exegesis to which Rilke has so frequently been offered up, and his 'poetic thought' can be described in terms of 'thought as such' rather more adequately than is generally the case. But of course it *is* his 'poetic thought' that matters, because it is as a poet that Hölderlin matters, not as a philosopher. And since

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symbolism, in the sense in which Mr. Stahl uses that somewhat maltreated word, is really what we mean when we talk of 'poetic thought', it is hardly possible to dissent from Mr. Stahl's mode of approach.

The kind of development we are shown is what one might expect from a poet whose symbols, as Mr. Stahl says, do not to any remarkable extent derive from the unconscious levels of the mind (and we may note that symbolism in German poetry has been in general a very different thing from symbolism in French poetry: it has borne a closer relationship to the dictionary definition of the word). It is analogous to the development of the metaphor in Shakespeare.

> 'In his early poetry Hölderlin is concerned above all to say that he is experiencing such and such thoughts, feeling such and such emotions, and it is the fact that he is experiencing and feeling them that matters most to him . . . His youthful style lacks allusiveness and subtlety. It is fervid and vigorous, but too nakedly expressive. Its purpose is expostulation, not revelation'.

and hence it is natural that we should find Hölderlin using a technique which is better described as *allegory* than as symbolism. He was, during these early years, inculcating opinions about Freedom, Love, Nature, the mind of the child, the high vocation of the artist, and this was a process more useful to himself than to us, his readers. It was, so to speak, the rough crop of rape or clover which is ploughed back into the land to enrich it. This early exposulation is to the later, almost cruelly persuasive communication of Hölderlin's hopes and fears for civilization what the loosely-knit euphuistic conceit of Shakespeare's early plays is to the tensively expanding metaphor of the mature plays.

As a particular example, Mr. Stahl chooses the image, in itself not unusual, of the river whose predestined course at last carries it into the ocean, and he traces it through Hölderlin's poetry, showing how it gradually accumulates significance, from the flat 'Loyal to her nod each river flows into the mighty sea' of the *Lied der Liebe* to the sustained electric discharge of

> Not for him, as for other children,
> To whimper in swaddling-bands;
> For as soon as the margins begin
> To creep in serpentine windings
> Towards him, and, thirstily coiling
> Around him, all heedless, would fain
> Confine him and closely preserve him
> Between their teeth, with a laugh
> He strangles them both and plunges
> On with his prey; and now, if a greater
> Does not speedily tame him,
> But lets him grow, like the lightning
> He needs must cleave the earth, and, as though bewitched,
> The woods and collapsing hills whirl fleeing behind him.

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A god though means to save for his sons
Their hurrying life . . .

of *Der Rhein,*[1] and then the final dissolution of the symbol in *Der Ister,* the product of a mind succumbing to madness.

That such a development occurred is worth emphasizing; the tragic fact of Hölderlin's later insanity might incline us to think of him as the type of inspired but spasmodic genius who flashed out his unpremeditated message in an interval of illumination and then disappeared as suddenly as he appeared, like a shooting star. In reality, Hölderlin was a hard-working man of letters, alert and well-informed on matters of contemporary interest, and his greatest poetry, for all its twisted syntax and its darting questions and answers, is the culmination of a continuously operative process which began with simple personification and the uninspired if noble aspirations of Schiller and Klopstock. When we realize that Hölderlin's use of symbols *developed* rather than just happened, we also realize that we cannot dismiss the so-called apocalyptic elements in his later work as no more than the 'apocalypse' conveyed in the verse of some of the younger English poets of the present time whose symbols seem to have acquired either too little or (since it doesn't matter which way you put it) too much meaning. *Patmos* is no flash in the pan: and if one chooses to call it Hölderlin's Book of Apocalypse one must be quick to mention that it has the rest of his bible behind it.

The only serious criticism one can make of this little pamphlet (which says so much more than most large volumes on the subject) is in reference to its preliminary section dealing with the nature of symbolism. The quotations from Hegel, Whitehead, William James, Gérard de Nerval, and the references to Yeats and the French Symbolists tend to confuse, rather than clarify, the issue; Mr. Stahl could have communicated his definition of symbolism as found in Hölderlin's poetry more clearly, I feel, had he omitted all this extraneous witness. And Mr. Stahl's unnecessarily nervous statement in his preface that 'my line of approach does not imply a belief on my part that the excellence of Hölderlin's poetry is necessarily linked with his use of symbolism', when compared with his later description of the use of symbols as 'the expression of *poetic* thought, a realm where ideas are the very essence of the poet's being' would seem to suggest that he himself is not entirely clear about the nature of symbolism. It would be a great pity should any resultant haziness or distrust on the part of the reader prevent him appreciating what is the best thing in this essay—the lucid and illuminating analysis of the important mature poem, *Der Rhein;* these four pages show the interpretative critic at his best, with chapter and verse given for every comment, every deduction. If there can be said to be a key to Hölderlin's poetry, then Mr. Stahl offers it to us here.

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[1] *Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poems,* translated by J. B. Leishman.

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The glimpses Mr. Stahl gives us of the poet meditating on the art of poetry suggest that there is room for a study of Hölderlin as literary critic. If, once again, we wish to evaluate *Patmos* we should bear in mind this dictum of his:

> 'The point at which sobriety deserts you is the point at which you reach the limit of your inspiration. A great poet is never deserted by his self, however much he may lift himself above himself. It is possible to fall upwards into height, just as much as downwards into depth'.

with which we may connect his bitter epigram, *Good Advice*:

> If you have an intellect and a heart,
> then only show one of them;
> Both will be condemned in you,
> if you show them both at once.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

MUSIC

THE RISE OF MUSIC IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, by Curt Sachs (*Dent*, 25/-).

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MUSIC OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES, by Carl Dolmetsch (*Novello*, 15/-).

THE SOURCES OF KEYBOARD MUSIC IN ENGLAND, by Van den Borren (*Novello*, 13/6).

TRADITIONAL HARMONY, and THE CRAFT OF MUSICAL COMPOSITION, Vol. 1 Theory, Vol. 2 Exercises in Two-part writing, by Paul Hindemith (*Associated Music Publishers and Schott and Co*).

The appearance in this country of the above important musicological and theoretical works, some for the first time, others in a re-issue, cannot be allowed to pass without a brief notice. The Dolmetsch work is invaluable in its collecting and sifting of contemporary theoretical documents, even if one doesn't always agree with the author's interpretation of them; it should be in the hands of every executive artist who performs the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for it is essentially a practical book and not one merely for 'students'. Unfortunately the number of artists with sufficient interest in and humility towards their art to want to read it could almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. The Van den Borren book is a classic on its subject, full of exciting information. In some particulars it has dated a little (the author is for instance almost completely ignorant of the keyboard works of Gibbons—with Bull our greatest keyboard composer—and has only

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a very hazy notion of the range and comprehensiveness of the genius of Byrd), and no attempt is made to relate Elizabethan domestic music to its environment. But the book is an indispensable basis for anyone interested in the music of the period.

The Curt Sachs book is a model of what a musicological work should be. It is written with great distinction, is exceptionally intelligent and comprehensive in its sociological interpretation of the fascinating musical phenomena which it describes both with amazing erudition and with elegance; and is finely produced and illustrated. It is rare indeed to find a musicologist whose learning preserves so broadly human a basis, so acute an understanding of the complex issues involved. Parts of the book are difficult reading; but even people without sufficient technical equipment to follow the more abstruse passages will consider themselves lucky if they are able to pick up a copy of what I do not hesitate to call a great work.

Detailed review of Hindemith's theoretical work is hardly appropriate to a periodical not exclusively concerned with music. It should be said, however, that the work is not only absorbingly interesting as an attempt to formulate a theory of tonal combinations with reference to the scientific facts of sound—a theory which is therefore non-academic and able to shed light on the technical processes of the music of any period from Perotin to Hindemith himself—but is also the most rewarding practical text-book for students which I've come across. This is hardly surprising since it is based on the actual teaching experience of one of the most brilliant technicians (and most vital composers) of our time.

W.H.M.

BRITISH COUNCIL RECORDINGS

ELGAR: *The Dream of Gerontius* (Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Huddersfield Choral Society, with Heddle Nash. Dennis Noble and Gladys Ripley, conducted by Malcolm Sargent) H.M.V. under the auspices of the British Council.

HOLST: *The Planets* (B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult). H.M.V. under the auspices of the British Council.

Both these works are of critical importance in English musical history; in different ways they both show genius triumphing over extremely adverse circumstances. Few composers have ever been more 'of their age', less doubtful of their premisses than Elgar, and yet that age was one in which taste and values had fallen to an unprecedentedly low ebb. (Elgar's own taste in other people's art was very shaky; his partiality for Swannee River for instance is an extremer example of the tendency revealed in Hardy's admiration for Marmion).. It is as though he miraculously discovered a genuine power, sensitivity and nobility in attitudes which,

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in Edwardian society, normally assumed an undesirable form. The astonishing technical virtuosity of his opulent, even over-ripe symphonies is something that one would normally look for only at the end of a great symphonic tradition. Elgar, as it were, assumes the existence of such a tradition (which in fact we by-passed), and that he should be able to do so is testimony to the unique vigour of his genius, whether or no we find it congenial. Similarly the characteristic late-nineteenth-century mingling of personal emotionalism with religion which one finds in Gerontius (the sequential sevenths and ninths) fills one with foreboding; and yet the actual effect in performance is usually remote from any Victorian stained-glass impression, is wonderfully fresh and immediate—in most of the typically opulent passages as well as in the exquisite diatonic opening to Part II. Throughout the work the supple and flexible treatment of the English language provides evidence of the way in which Elgar 'anglicizes' an idiom still basically teutonic. That Elgar is a great composer we can hardly doubt, nor can we blame him that his greatness has peculiar limitations: for he did his society more than justice, and to do that he had to be in some ways spiritually naïve.

Relatively Holst is a much more self-conscious composer and ultimately, much more 'aware' of the problems with which he had to deal. Traces of teutonic academicism are still noticeable in *The Planets* (for instance in what now seems a rather Hollywooden *Venus*): but indubitably this is the work in which the authentic uncompromising loneliness of Holst's genius first appeared. In intensity and excitement *Mars* still stands head and shoulders above its numerous imitations; and *Saturn* and *Neptune* are quintessential Holst pieces, which the composer perhaps later refined upon, but hardly excelled.

The richness and clarity of the Holst recording (involving a new technical process) has everywhere been commented on, not I think in excessive terms. By normal standards the Elgar recording is excellent; and the performances of both works are at once meticulous and virile. Heddle Nash, whom one doesn't hear so much of these days, is still a superb Gerontius. The British Council recordings are now beginning to form a really imposing and representative array: and the news that the Council has re-recorded Purcell's *Dido* makes one hope that we may eventually be given an adequate recorded library of English 'classics', as well as some work of the younger generation of living composers.

Bartok Quartets.

Miniature scores of Bartok's String Quartets numbers 2 to 6 have been re-issued by Boosey and Hawkes.

The attention of readers is drawn to the above: it is good to have easily and cheaply available these works which taken together constitute probably the most original and logical example of sustained musical thinking in contemporary music.

W.H.M.

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